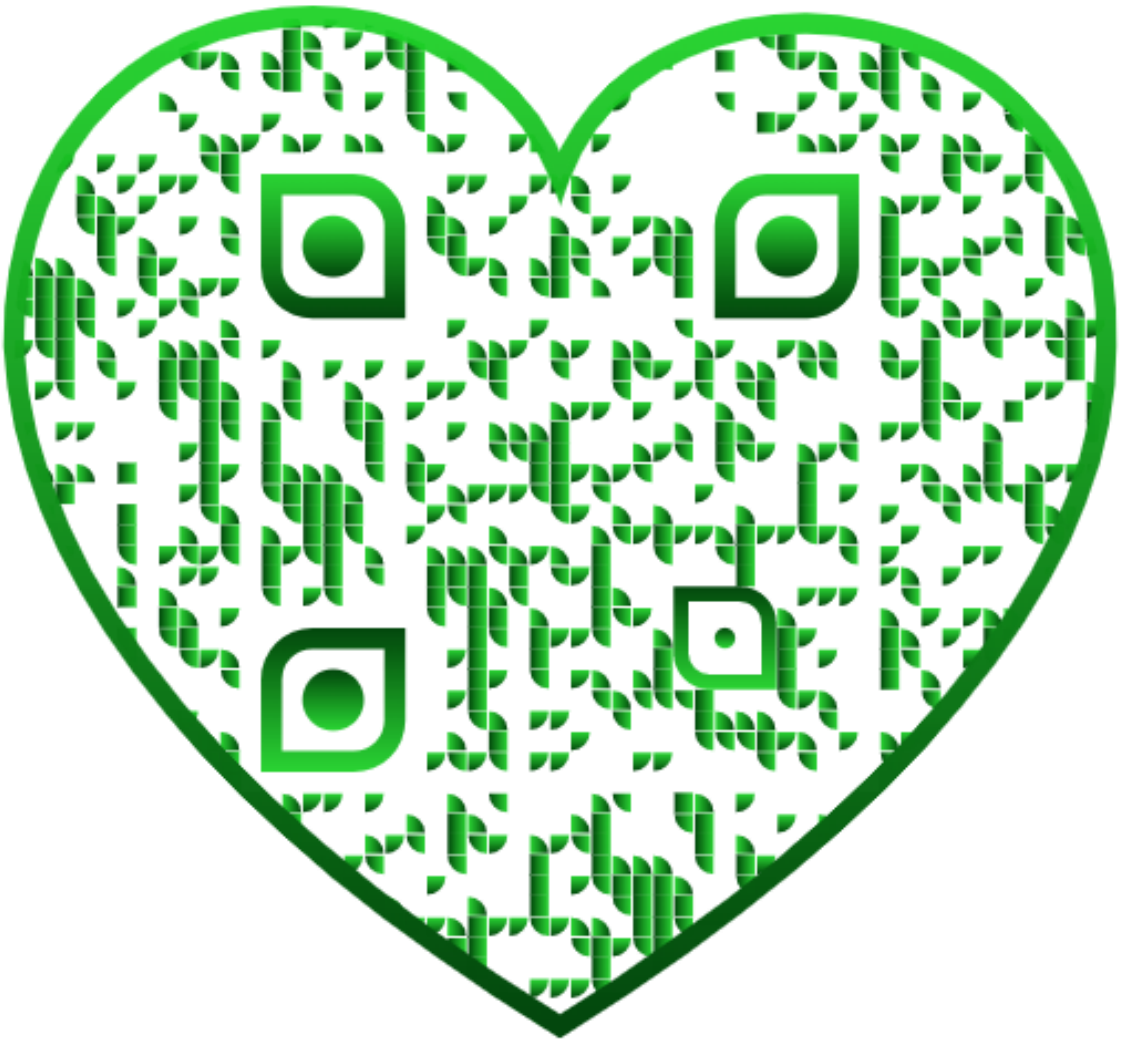
CAVE and COSMOS

Shamanic Encounters with Another Reality

by the author of the best-selling *The Way of the Shaman*

MICHAEL HARNER



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North Atlantic Books
Berkeley, California

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ABBREVIATIONS

CSS	Center for Shamanic Studies
FSS	Foundation for Shamanic Studies
OR	Ordinary Reality
MONOR	Mapping of Nonordinary Reality (project)
NOR	Nonordinary Reality
OSC	Ordinary State of Consciousness
SSC	Shamanic State of Consciousness
UMR	Unpublished MONOR Report

PREFACE

When still a professor of anthropology at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, I taught a seminar in which graduate students learned to do shamanic journeying in order to understand better the experiences of indigenous shamans. Each week the seminar participants were assigned the task of making a shamanic journey at home while listening to a journeying drumming tape, and writing a report on their experiences.

The second week, after doing her first homework assignment, a quiet young businesswoman, who had enrolled in the seminar only because its hours fit into her schedule, timidly raised her hand. She asked, more as an observation than a question, “Dr. Harner, we aren’t ever going to be the same again, are we?”

She was probably right.

INTRODUCTION

Since the appearance of my last book, *The Way of the Shaman*, more than three decades ago, my teaching has been primarily oral, in keeping with the age-old traditions of shamanism. The time has come, however, for me finally to address publicly certain questions that urgently deserve wider attention in the contemporary world. Two fundamental questions are whether there is more than one reality and whether we need to be alone in solving the challenges of existence.

This book tells the stories of some of the thousands of Westerners who found answers to such questions using the ancient methods of shamans, including drumming "over the rainbow" to discover amazing heavenly realms waiting to help them. They also found a new spiritual freedom, a freedom to *know*, and no longer just to *believe* or *disbelieve*.

The late, great scholar of comparative religion Mircea Eliade emphasized that shamans are unique in the world's spiritual traditions due to their ability to fly to other worlds, including heavens. They reached those worlds in what he called a state of "ecstasy," or an altered state of consciousness. This state was achieved, he said, "through the musical magic of the drum" that permitted the shaman to "reach the highest heaven."[1] Little more was said, however, about the nature of that "musical magic."

Drums are everywhere in photographs of Siberian shamans, particularly famous for those flights out of this world. Those drums, many scholars suggested, were used just for "theatrical effect" in shamanic sessions, and some even claimed that Siberian shamans did

not change their consciousness at all. Others, following mycologist Gordon Wasson, believed that the ingestion of the psychoactive mushroom *Amanita muscaria* was really responsible for the Siberian shamans' belief that they flew to other worlds.

The ubiquity of the drums in those photographs aroused my curiosity, and in the late 1960s I started experimenting with drumming to see if it had an effect in making those magical flights. After various experiments, I was excited to conclude that a steady rhythm of 205 to 220 beats per minute worked perfectly to change consciousness and, with knowledge of shamanism, to make flights or journeys to spirit worlds.[2] This is "auditory driving," or "sonic driving," an entirely drug-free and classic method of the shaman.

In response to requests, my personal practice with the drum led me to teach small groups how to use drumming to change consciousness not only to visit other worlds, but also to bring shamanic help and healing into our daily lives. Demand for this knowledge grew, and in 1979 my wife Sandra Harner and I started the Center for Shamanic Studies (now the Foundation for Shamanic Studies) as a vehicle for teaching shamanism. At that time, I also experimented with making shamanic-drumming recordings so that people could journey without a live drum. (It should be noted that the practice of making shamanic journeys in itself does not make one a shaman, but such a practice is a very useful step toward learning and practicing shamanism, for through journeying one can learn directly and rapidly from the spirits.) Then in 1980 I published *The Way of the Shaman,* a book that started the worldwide shamanic revival.[3]

Through personal fieldwork and training with surviving tribal shamans starting more than half a century ago, as well as through my own shamanic practice and by reading reports on hundreds of cultures, I discovered, learned, experimented with, and revived a variety of shamanic practices. From these I originated "core shamanism"—those universal, near-universal, and common features of shamanism, together with journeys to other worlds, a distinguishing feature of shamanism—as a teaching methodology to bring shamanism to contemporary life. It includes the implicit, if not

indigenously explicit, recognition of two realities, ordinary and nonordinary, the latter usually entered by a change into what I call the shamanic state of consciousness, which has a learned aspect and differing degrees of depth.

Today, using core shamanism and auditory driving, tens of thousands of persons worldwide are now able, like traditional Siberian shamans, to enter another reality to travel to other worlds as well as to work here in this world to provide healings and other shamanic help. (For those new to core shamanism, see Appendix D for more detailed information.)

For more than a quarter of a century, we have sponsored a project at the Foundation for Shamanic Studies that involves collecting and archiving shamanic knowledge, including almost five thousand reports by Westerners about what they found in their shamanic journeys into nonordinary reality—what have been called "journeys outside of time." The term "Westerners" is used simply as a term of convenience to cover present-day Americans (the largest group having unpublished records in the Foundation's archives), Canadians, and some Europeans.

This "Western" collection, which serves as the main source of this book's reports, is unique in the world. It is part of the Mapping of Nonordinary Reality (MONOR) project and belongs to the Foundation for Shamanic Studies Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory in Northern California, which also has a collection of publications on indigenous shamanism for hundreds of societies worldwide.[4]

For years I have been loath to publish this knowledge prematurely, for fear that once it was "out there," it might deprive new students and other Westerners from having uninfluenced, autonomous experiences. Now, however, through the Foundation's oral teachings in training courses and workshops as much as anything, "the word is out." To avoid "contamination" of experiences by excessive advance communication regarding what others have experienced (thereby preventing truly novel and spontaneous journeys to the unknown), the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory no longer accepts new Western experiential shamanic reports, and it seems the time has

come to unveil a small sample of these discoveries through publication here.

The Westerners whose experiences are in this book made ascensions to what many scholars of shamanism call the Upper World and descents to the Lower World, as contrasted with the one in which we live, which is the Middle World. The worlds above and below are entirely in nonordinary reality, and they are solely spirit realms, while the one we live in has both its ordinary-reality aspect, the one we easily perceive, and its nonordinary aspect, which is a domain of spirits and is less easily perceived without shamanic training.

The Upper World is quite different from the ordinary-reality phenomena above us, the phenomena observed by astronomers. Even the most distant galaxies of our universe are still not the Upper World of the shamans. The Westerners, in descending to the Lower World, were likewise not going down the rock layers of the geologists' Earth but were passing into a purely spirit realm below us, one without earthly limitations.

This book provides examples of nonordinary Western experiences in all three worlds, with the main emphasis being on the Upper World, partially because today in the West there seems to be great curiosity about what, if anything, is "up there" spiritually. In other words, are heavens real, fantasy, or metaphorical?

Our evidence suggests that the answer depends upon which of two realities, ordinary or nonordinary, one is talking about. In nonordinary reality—accessed with classic shamanic techniques, including auditory driving—there now seems to be no question of the existence of heavens, celestial choirs, deities, and the presence of beings, or spirits, in the Upper World. Evidence is also presented for the existence of spirits in our own world, the Middle World.

The ascension-derived evidence in this book challenges the beliefs of those who claim that there is only one heaven and that round-trips there are restricted to a few long-dead prophets, saints, and founders of Great Religions. Evenhandedly, the reports also challenge the beliefs of those atheists and "secular fundamentalists" who think that heavens are figments of the imagination. Even in Christianity today,

some members of the clergy suggest that heaven is a feeling rather than a place.

Years ago in *The Way of the Shaman* I gave Westerners an introduction to making shamanic journeys to the Lower World, and many have traveled there during the past three decades. That is one of the reasons I do not place as much emphasis in the present book on the Lower World as on the Upper. Still, the final chapter of *Cave and Cosmos* provides new and surprising information about what some Westerners have discovered in the Lower World.

As the cosmographic reports contained in this book are important contributions to shamanic knowledge in and of themselves, I do not attempt in the limited space here to make comparisons to the accounts of near-death survivors, nor to the firsthand journey experiences of indigenous shamans, the latter being surprisingly scarce. I recognize the importance of these and other comparative studies and urge that they be undertaken. The work in your hands is intended, among other things, to encourage just such investigations.

I wish to add that in this book I am not trying to bridge disciplines. I am an anthropologist, a shamanologist, a practitioner of shamanism and, in the case of this book, a cosmographer of Western shamanic experiences. Nothing more. Those who wish to reconcile shamanism with another discipline—for example, psychology—should try to resist the immediate temptation, as in *Casablanca*, to "round up the usual suspects," the standard reductionist tools. I have nothing against reduction-ism per se, but in my opinion it should only follow true mastery of any field being "reduced." In the case of shamanism, it should include mastery of shamanism from extensive firsthand experience, experimentation, and study, in addition to a comparable mastery of whatever field is being compared. Admittedly this is not an easy task … but when was serious scholarship ever easy?[5]

Considerable care was taken over the years during workshops and courses to teach the Westerners studying core shamanism how to go to other worlds without giving them more than minimal directions. Detailed information on the instructions they received can be found in Appendices A and B. *There you are invited to use the same shamanic*

journey methods yourself to compare your own experiences with those described here. However, the appendices are not intended to form a "how-to" book, but rather to be an opportunity for readers to test the reality and nature of the discoveries made by Westerners in the Upper World (and to a lesser extent the Lower World) that are reported in these pages.

Once you have read this book, you unfortunately will no longer be naïve about what to expect if you ascend to the Upper World or descend to the Lower. Even so, if you accept the above invitation, be prepared for some amazing discoveries, including the discovery that you yourself will no longer be dependent on others' reports of what is there or not. With core shamanism, some of the ironclad cosmological dogmas of church, state, and science may be expected to rust away.

As I write this, I am now eighty-three years old. Much of what I have learned about shamanism in the last half century has long since been evaluated and internalized into a personal body of knowledge that I've passed on to others orally in many talks with footnotes of remembrance lost in the sands of time. Portions of this book embody talks I gave to my students and to the public over the course of more than three decades.

However, one of the safeguards in reading my statements about shamanism is that serious readers can experientially test most of my statements through their own shamanic work. Central to what I offer in these pages are new data and ways to verify them. If you find that parts of the book remind you of something you have read or heard elsewhere, do not be surprised, for I have personally taught the principles and methods of shamanism and shamanic journeying to thousands of students. Some of them have already published portions of my oral teachings,[6] but not the new data presented here.

Bringing shamanism back to the West includes encouraging you, the reader, to become more confident of your own spiritual authority. I wish to encourage your spiritual autonomy even in reading this book. Although I could not restrain myself from some personal comments regarding certain of these Westerners' reports, others are purposely presented with few or no remarks to foster your own

independent thinking.

We have had enough people speaking on pulpits and before congregations of one religion or another, repeating or analyzing to exhaustion the same old stories regarding the experiences of founders of Great Religions. Now it is time for you to avail yourself of the opportunity to have such experiences of your own. In that connection, the reports here, however interesting, are not a substitute for the real thing: your own firsthand experiences. Likewise, this book is not intended as a traditional scholarly tome addressed primarily to an academic audience but is an effort to inspire readers to new heights, literally, by exposing them to new data and concepts.

I see the new information presented here—i.e., the records of others' experiences and the inspiration they may provide—as my main task and contribution in this volume. The Foundation's archives have been combed for examples of a wide range of experiences that, while nonordinary, are within the range of possibility and potential for all of us. Together with the tenets of core shamanism just outlined, these accounts—vital perspectives on our situation as human beings—constitute a package that can broaden the horizons of interested readers.

I have chosen to spend my limited time to put information into this book that I feel is really important, even urgent, to pass on to a fractious and perilous world willing to quarrel interminably about spiritual matters on the basis of belief in old stories. The shaman's way is that of firsthand knowledge, not of stories (even mine!), and in many indigenous cultures the shaman is "one who knows."

I hope that readers will find this book useful in helping them lessen their dependence on the cosmological dogmas of organized religion and science. I hope you are encouraged, or further encouraged, in your own shamanic encounters with another reality, for there we can find incredible compassion, help, and healing that we badly need in our world. In a way, this is a data-oriented declaration of spiritual independence, and an invitation to use that knowledge and freedom to bring more wisdom, compassion, and joy into your life and the lives of others.

—Michael Harner
Autumn 2012

1

Spirit Power and the Cave

POWER

In February 1957, a small band of Shuar (Jívaro) men and I became lost after trekking for weeks through mountainous Upper Amazon rainforest. Tired, disoriented, and hungry, we finally ran into a friendly group of Shuar hunters who told us that we had been going in exactly the wrong direction. They shared a bit of their provisions and pointed the way toward the Shuar neighborhood we sought.

Leaving the hunters, we soon came to a small but raging river, fed by recent rainstorms in the Andes to the west. This was an obstacle to our further progress, so we waited for several days for the waters to go down, without luck. My companions waited quietly and seemed unperturbed by the situation while I became increasingly impatient, for I knew it was possible to construct rafts of balsa logs and to get across using makeshift guadua bamboo paddles. Several times I proposed to my companions that we should wait no longer for the water to recede but instead make rafts and paddle over to the other side. Repeatedly they declined to do so.

Growing increasingly impatient, I finally challenged my companions, pointing out that they called themselves great warriors but were unwilling to cross the river. Without comment, they shortly constructed three balsa log rafts, and we prepared to make the crossing. The river was about 150 feet across, and the first raft, paddled by two of the Indians and carrying some of our baggage,

made it to the other side. Then I went on the second raft with two paddlers. We made it about three-quarters of the way across and then were swept down into the rapids where the raft overturned, dumping us into the raging torrent. With extreme effort we were able to swim the remaining distance and survive. The third raft made it across.

As we collected ourselves and rested before hiking farther, I remarked to them, “That was a pretty close call. I guess we are lucky to be alive.”

I was expecting some agreement, at least tacitly, but my companions silently remained standing there like stereotypes of stoical Indian warriors. They gave the impression that this had been nothing, acting completely unfazed.

Their lack of reaction perplexed me, because these were the same men who were reluctant to cross the river despite my urging. So I undiplomatically pointed out that they had not wanted to make the river crossing, and now they were acting as if it were nothing, even though they had been afraid to cross.

They exchanged glances with each other but said nothing. Then one of them, whom I knew particularly well, finally replied. He said, “Well, you see, we were not really afraid to cross the river because we cannot die. But we did not know about you!”

At that moment, the perilous Amazon river crossing opened a door to important spiritual knowledge. After that I gradually learned from the Shuar that they were protected by spirit power against all forms of death except epidemic disease. I also learned that such power can leave one. Thus unprotected, people do indeed die. Therefore, before leaving on precarious missions, people watched for signs as to whether they still possessed the protective powers provided by their guardian spirits. If the signs were negative, they did not depart on such a mission, especially if it involved an attack on an enemy.

Like the Shuar, indigenous shamans worldwide know that spirit power is basic to one’s health, survival, and ability to heal others. Without this power, one is not resistant to illness or misfortune. In traditional shamanic cultures this awareness permeates the daily life of virtually everyone.

Jaime de Angulo, who spent time with the Atsugewe people of Northern California in the early twentieth century, said it well: “Without power you cannot do anything out of the ordinary. With power you can do anything.”[1]

The power is like a force field that permeates the shaman and permits him or her to use the power to help and heal others. The shaman’s idea of power is similar to our concept of energy, yet it includes more: energy as well as intelligence and self-confidence. Spiritual power is not political power or power over others. It is power essential to one’s health and ability to survive.

SPIRITS

At this point let me explain what I mean by a “spirit.” As I have said elsewhere, a spirit can be defined as “an animate essence that has intelligence and different degrees of power, that is seen most easily in complete darkness and much less frequently in bright light, and in an altered state of consciousness better than an ordinary state. In fact, there is some question whether you can see it in an ordinary state of consciousness at all.”[2]

In other words, not all spirits have significant power. Those spirits that do are often referred to by shamanic peoples simply as “powers.” Particularly important in indigenous cultures are the guardian spirits that provide protective power to the people they love.[3] When properly invoked by a shaman, such a power also provides active healing assistance for curing illness and pain in the shaman’s patients. Through experience, the shaman has learned which spirits are powerful.

Power is acquired in different ways. In Siberia and parts of South America it was common to gain personal power after suffering from a severe illness that put someone at death’s door. If that person suddenly had a miraculous recovery, the local community concluded that a spirit had compassion for the person and interceded to relieve him or her of the illness. In such an event, people in the community typically would go to the revived and cured patient to see if the

healing power could be used to help another individual suffering from a malady, usually a similar one. In other words, the suffering of the ill person could evoke pity by a spirit. In this way, a shaman sometimes was created.

SEEKING SPIRIT POWER

Ideally, one should not wait to become ill to aspire to gain this power. Members of traditional shamanic cultures understood this well and encouraged young people in good health to suffer voluntarily in order that ancestral spirits might intervene to help them by sharing their power. Much more than a healing energy, this power was seen as a force that would support people in daily life, helping them to avoid misfortune and hardship, and to achieve good outcomes.

Most famously, this acquisition of power occurred in the power quest, more commonly called the "vision quest." It should be mentioned, however, that not all successful power quests involved achieving visions. For example, among the Southern Okanagan of Washington State, the seeker might not see the spirit but instead receive its power through an auditory experience, such as a song and words.[4]

Most power quests were not something to be done by a sick person, but by one who was healthy and often relatively young. In a sense, it was a kind of spiritual life insurance to further an individual's success and survival.

Spirit power could usually be sought by almost anyone in a variety of isolated places where ancestral and other guardians were known to reside. Such sites include mountaintops, the depths of a cave, a remote waterfall, the Arctic wilderness, particular canyons, local burial sites or ruins, a remote trail, and other locations. But one thing remained constant for success: the spirits had to be convinced that a power-seeking visitor to their haunts deserved help. When arriving at such a place, the visitor would usually sing or silently speak to the spirits there, asking for their assistance.

The quest took various forms. Regardless of culture, it commonly required seekers to prove themselves by suffering voluntarily, such as from fear, hunger, thirst, extreme cold or heat, and exhaustion. In shamanism, suffering is not a method of atoning for one's "sins," but a way of attracting the help of powerful spirits.

Among some Inuit of the Arctic, one way to have a successful quest for power was to spend four or five days in a special isolated igloo in the depths of winter without food or water. When the specified time elapsed, an elder, usually a shaman, opened the igloo and brought the person home. The igloo did not have even an oil lamp to heat it, so the suffering from extreme cold was combined with suffering from lack of water and food. It is reported that in some cases the person seeking power might be naked during this time of questing. A less life-challenging example is my own power quest among the Shuar that involved an exhausting climb up the forested eastern slopes of the Andes, a near-freezing bath at a waterfall, and no solid food allowed prior to obtaining a vision helped by the overwhelming power of datura (*Brugmansia* sp.) juice.[5]

Voluntary suffering for such power sometimes still occurs among Native American peoples of the Great Plains of North America, where the person seeking a vision and power typically first becomes dehydrated in the purification or "sweat" lodge. There the individual will intentionally suffer from the extreme heat and may even start becoming aware of spirit appearances and manifestations. Afterward, the seeker goes to an isolated mountaintop accompanied by a shaman-priest (medicine man) and/or other elders. The individual is left all alone for a prearranged number of days, and then the elders return to retrieve the person from the mountaintop.

In the more extreme form of the Plains vision or power quest, the seeker would be wrapped in a blanket or quilt and placed in the ground in an L-shaped hole that had already been constructed and used previously. The vision seeker's sacred pipe was included. The hole would then be covered to reduce light so that the person would be better able to have visionary experiences both day and night, and

to increase suffering through isolation, sensory deprivation, and cold. The suffering was heightened by not being allowed to drink water at any time after the sweat lodge or during the quest.

The suffering is normally accompanied by praying to the ancestors, "Have pity on me," usually addressing them as "grandfathers" since among indigenous peoples in the Upper Amazon and the North American Plains, "grandfathers" tends to be a gloss for all ancestors, because in many shamanic cultures there is no special word for ancestors. Once again, the suffering is intended to evoke compassion by the ancestral spirits so they may provide visionary experiences that bestow spiritual power on the supplicant. In revealing themselves, they may appear in either animal or human form.

Why should those ancestor spirits provide help? The answer is really simple: when leaving ordinary reality at the time of death, they have chosen to remain here in the Middle World in order to help their genealogical descendants or allies of their descendants. When properly evoked, and convinced that a visitor deserves help, these spirits will reveal themselves in the forms the beings choose, communicate, and lend power to help the pilgrim overcome the difficulties and dangers of life. I often call them quasi-compassionate ethnocentric spirits, or simply ethnocentric spirits. Their protective compassion is conditional in two main ways: (1) they tend to help their descendants as long as they themselves are remembered and honored; and (2) they can be highly vengeful against those who threaten their descendants or allies of their descendants.

ANOTHER WAY OF SEEKING POWER: SPIRIT ATTRACTION

There is a different way to acquire spirit power that does not involve suffering or pleas for compassion. I call this "spirit attraction." In the process of calling and working with spirits, shamans often ingest foods or drinks liked by their peoples or by certain animals. The shamanic purpose is to attract and even merge with a helping spirit and its power. Thus, Siberian and Mongolian shamans pray and drink vodka to entice vodka-loving ancestral spirits (often of deceased shaman relatives) to merge with them. Northwest Coast shamans may

pray and eat salmon to attract the spirits of bear, bald eagle, and "the Indian." We will return to this subject.

WALTER CLINE AND OKANAGAN CLUES

An American anthropology student working his way on a tramp steamer in the late 1920s jumped into the sea near the North African coast. His name was Walter Cline. He swam to shore hoping to live with the Berbers, which he did. He became fluent in Arabic, living in Morocco, Syria, Ethiopia, and Arabia, and he helped in archaeological excavations at Thebes in Egypt. In 1936 he received a PhD in anthropology from Harvard. During those Depression years he held a temporary job with the federal Works Progress Administration in north-central Washington State, interviewing Okanagan Indian elders about their traditional knowledge and disappearing culture, including their former cave power quests.

In the early 1950s he taught at the University of California in Berkeley as a part-time lecturer on "primitive religion." Cline was an enthusiastic and inspiring teacher. I felt privileged to be his student during the last two years of his life while he was dying of cancer, an illness that had already cost him one of his arms.

He and his remarkable wife, Marjorie, scraped out a living by selling used anthropological books and monographs from their apartment. Despite their meager income, the two of them frequently visited western North American Indian peoples and returned with incredible stories, often involving shamans, that he told his classes. Unlike most of his other colleagues at that time, Cline did not attempt to explain away shamanism from a psychological point of view. The students loved, even revered him, for he brought to their lives an unparalleled kindness, openness, and enthusiasm for anthropology made all the more remarkable by the fact that he was at death's door. He awakened my first interest in shamanism.

Walter Cline was a modest man, so it was not until two decades after his death, when I had long since been teaching anthropology myself, that I accidentally discovered that he had contributed to a little-known publication on the Sinkaietk or Southern Okanagan

Indian people of the Columbia River Plateau.[6] With some difficulty, I finally obtained a copy. In it was limited but important power quest information that he had gathered from tribal elders.

Cline focused on power quests undertaken by small children, reportedly boys, who sought generalized power to help them with their future lives.[7] He learned of an instance where a father lowered his son into a cave for an overnight stay to gain power.[8]

WILLARD PARK AND PAVIOTSO POWER QUESTS

In addition to the clues in Walter Cline's reports about the Okanagan, I found the writings of ethnologist Willard Park especially valuable, for he had learned that the cave power quest was important to shamans among the Paviotso (Northern Paiute) people in Nevada, whom he interviewed in the early and mid-1930s.[9]

Park relates that Paviotso elders were emphatic about the necessity of strictly following certain traditional procedures for achieving success in such a quest.[10] He said that Paviotso shamans took food with them on cave quests to acquire some specific additional powers, such as to improve the success of their healing work.[11] This is consistent with the just-mentioned use of food in spirit attraction to acquire power.[12] Here I wish to quote Park:

> There are no preparations for the power-quest. The man who seeks a vision does not fast either before he undertakes the quest or during his stay in the cave. Nor is the quest for power accompanied by self-torture or extended physical exertion.
>
> Late in the afternoon, the man who seeks power goes to a cave where he has heard it is possible to acquire power. Food for a midnight and a morning meal may be taken along.[13]

Park did not mention any spiritual reason for taking food into the cave, but my knowledge of spirit attraction caused me to take the Paviotso methods very seriously. When a cave was located for my own quest, I planned to take a sandwich containing several types of food favored by different types of animals.

Sometimes the ancestral spirits seem willing to help a person who

is a nondescendant, or even from another culture or race, if they feel that the person has helped or will help their descendants. This was something I learned among both the Shuar and the Conibo peoples of South America. Over many years I had tried to assist Native Americans in North America in various ways, such as at Wounded Knee in 1973.[14] I hoped that this and some related efforts might count for me in a cave.

THE CAVE

A couple of years after writing *The Way of the Shaman*, I learned of a promising cave in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Hoping I had enough information, I resolved to do a cave power quest there to seek a special shamanic healing power and to see what, if anything, happened without the help of consciousness-changing plants or auditory driving, since their use was not mentioned by Park or Cline.

Finally on an evening in 1982 I approached the entrance of the cave alone, silently calling upon the spirits to have compassion for me and to confer greater power for my work in healing others. I used a flashlight to descend to a remote recess deep inside the cavern, which took about a quarter of an hour. There I extinguished the light. The darkness was thick and silent. Next, according to what I had learned, I was supposed to sleep until the middle of the night, wake up, eat a small amount of food, and not go back to sleep until something happened.

After sitting for some time on the cold bedrock, I pushed the button on my wristwatch to see the faint luminescence of the time. It was about nine o'clock in the evening. Two hours had passed since I entered the cave. According to the information I had, no matter what happened, I should have no light until the night had fully passed. Then I could leave the cave, for one of the ancient rules was that the quester could emerge only after the dawn of the next day. Otherwise, it was better never to have entered the cave at all. There were other things I would also have to do before the night ended.

Surrounded by dense darkness, I felt completely isolated from the

land of the living. Two kinds of fear wrestled within me. The lesser fear was that nothing would happen during this solitary night underground. After all, I did not belong to the indigenous North American people west of the Rocky Mountains who had practiced this ancient method of obtaining specific spiritual powers. Perhaps it was too much to expect anything approaching their experiences without their cultural background or without the strong hallucinogens of the Shuar (Jívaro), used during my previous experiences. Besides, I thought, what kind of vision or power quest was this, where one did not fast beforehand and even was supposed to have a midnight snack? In other words, would spirit attraction work?

The darkness, which had become reddish, felt like imminent death, silently and patiently waiting. My deeper fear was that I might die, alone in the interior of this gigantic rock tomb, a victim of my own presumptuousness. I knew from my vision quest by a waterfall in the Amazon years earlier that the spirits might do their utmost to frighten me and test my trust in them. In the Amazon, at least, there were my Shuar companions to protect me from fatal mistakes. For this quest in the cave, however, there were no living tutors. No one could be here with me. This was a completely solitary experiment—a gamble that I possessed enough information to succeed, and that the spirits were there and would help me.

Eventually I crawled into my sleeping bag to try to fall asleep, the next step to be followed in the cave. Lying on the rock floor beside my head was a sandwich that I had brought to eat in the middle of the night. I reminded myself to awaken around midnight, hoping that I would not fail by sleeping through the night.

Gradually fatigue overcame me, for a chronic back problem had made it an arduous and painful hike to the cave. My body wanted to rest. I fell asleep, still concerned that I might not be able to wake up near midnight.

I need not have worried. I was shocked awake by a feathered wing gently brushing across my face. I felt an adrenaline rush of excitement. I pressed the button on my wristwatch. The faint numbers showed the time was two minutes before twelve. My astonishment at

being awakened by the winged caress was accompanied by relief at being roused from my sleep in time to follow the midnight instructions. I groped for the sandwich, found it, and ate. I now planned to stay awake until something significant happened.

I sat there, rested and fully conscious, alert to anything that might occur. About a quarter of an hour went by. Then half an hour passed. I was starting to feel disappointed. Perhaps nothing more was going to occur.[15]

Suddenly, from the direction of the distant entrance of the cavern, came the sound of hooves. The sound became louder; it was clearly a herd of animals. I could not believe what I was hearing.

The noise of their galloping got closer and closer. This seemed impossible. Yet the sound became so great I had to cover my ears. Was I to be trampled to death? I crouched down. Then the thundering hooves swept past on both sides of me, rushing deeper into the cave and beyond. Although I could not see them, I heard them snorting as they galloped by. “We are Horse,” they said, in a communication like telepathy, but stronger.

Then another, smaller herd followed fast upon them, their breathing and hoofbeats not quite as loud. “We are Bison,” they said.

Then they were gone. The cave was silent again. I was ecstatic, truly ecstatic. Tears of joy and thanksgiving were running down my cheeks. It was a miracle. This was no dream, for I was still wide awake.

Then, as I was sitting there, an immense indescribable power rushed toward me from the same direction that the herds had come. But this time, there was no sound, no warning. It swept overwhelmingly through my body like a freight train. A surge of immense energy filled my body. I was astonished. The power had come! Then the animal was gone.

As it bounded soundlessly away through the darkness beyond the recesses of the cave, it called back to me: “I am XXX, XXX, XXX!” It said, “I am one and all. You and I are one.” Then there was only silence.

I felt indescribable awe and gratitude.

After a few minutes, and with some effort, I recalled the traditional shamanic knowledge of what was to be done now, and what was not to be done. I was to go to sleep again to receive a dream showing me how to use the newly acquired power. What I was not to do, until I was very, very old, was to reveal directly the identity of the animal power that penetrated me.

I was too excited to feel sleepy, but I crawled back into the sleeping bag again and, after perhaps an hour, dozed off. Eventually I reawakened. Still in my sleeping bag, I slowly looked around. I sensed that I was not alone. The reddish darkness was as thick as ever, but it seemed nonetheless that I could see the largest wall of the cave. High on it, a life-size human image gradually appeared, as though faintly projected onto a movie screen. The image slowly became brighter until I could discern the form of a smiling slender young woman with long dark hair. She seemed vaguely familiar.

I was perplexed. Who could this be? As if in answer, now her name was being faintly transmitted to me. First it seemed to be a name in English; and then, more strongly, it evolved into a somewhat similar-sounding name in an unknown language.

I waited for the name to metamorphose again, since it did not seem like a real one. It was certainly not one I recognized. But it did not change. The name was the real and final name, she communicated.

For a minute or two, she undulated slowly and sensuously in an enticing manner. Somehow I was wary of her unspoken invitation, for there was something menacing about her presence, and I did not respond. The woman smiled once more and disappeared. I was again alone. The experience had been so strong that I carefully memorized the strange name, Elieth, even though it meant nothing to me.

I waited a while longer without anything more happening. I pressed the button on my watch. It was six thirty-five in the morning, after what I thought was probably the time of sunrise.

Yet I remained sitting in my place a while longer to avoid leaving the cave prematurely. I did not want to take the chance of violating the quest rules and thereby losing the animal power that was transmitted to me earlier. While waiting, I noticed that now the

darkness was comfortable and unimportant, almost like an illusion.

I found my flashlight and turned it on for the first time since arriving at this spot in the cavern, rolled up the sleeping bag, and walked upward toward the cave's mouth. My back pain of the previous day was gone.

After a quarter hour of ascending toward the cavern's opening, I saw daylight and the greenery of trees beyond. I climbed up and out of the cave's mouth into warm and blinding sunlight. It was good to be home where the sun gives life to all things.

Descending the slope below the cave, I reached out to touch the beautiful leaves of the plants and bushes. It seemed a great gift to be able to return to the planet's surface with its green life and sunshine. I thanked the spirits for their help and for allowing me to return to this world.

I knew that I was transformed, for the power of the XXX had literally become one with me.

Postscript. Although my cave power quest had been successful, I remained puzzled by the significance of the woman with the name Elieth who had appeared and tried to entice me. Through my reading in the ensuing years, I concluded that she was possibly the ancient Hebrew goddess Lilith, although the name was slightly different.

I was interested to discover that according to various old post-Biblical Jewish sources, Lilith's home is a cave; she is mistress of all the animals and a killer of infants, and she was known for seducing men sleeping alone.

According to some power-quest traditions, it is expected that an animal power encounter will shortly be followed by a dream. That indeed happened to me in the cave, except that I can assure you it was no sleeping dream. In that dream or event, the seeker's helping power will usually be an ancestor appearing in human form. However, it is said that on rare occasions this second appearance can be not of a helping being, but of a harmful one attempting to interfere with the seeker's quest.[16]

My opinion has long been that Elieth might have been such an interfering power, taking advantage of my openness in the cave. So, many decades ago, I told her to go away and have never asked her for help. To reinforce my disconnection from her, I now reveal her identity in this book. It is generally understood in shamanism that such a public declaration, if coupled with the intent to disconnect, usually sends away a personal power spirit.

Meanwhile, I have long honored and maintained my confidential relationship with XXX. However, I am old, and we shall see how much longer XXX remains.

One last observation: this may have been the first recorded successful cave power quest by a Westerner since those of ancient Europeans many thousands of years ago. But they did publish first—on their rock walls! (See Plate 1.)

2

We Exist! The Spirits Call for Recognition

Readers may naturally wonder if what happened to me in the cave was a product of my imagination. That is understandable, for there were no witnesses who could validate my experiences. Fortunately, however, sometimes the spirits demonstrate their existence and power to two or more people at a time, and even to large groups of people. When this happens, these public demonstrations are often called miracles.

For the shaman who is intimately interacting with helping spirits, miracles are almost routine events in healing work. In fact, spirit-produced miracles of healing are probably shamans' most celebrated feature in indigenous societies. Separate from helping shamans carry out healing activities, spirits often attempt to communicate their reality through miracles and "micro-miracles." These "wake-up calls" that the spirits send, often with the help of a shaman or shamanic practitioner, are perhaps best understood as attempts to educate people about their existence. I will now share a few in which I was personally involved.

MIRACLE 1: THE NEW PAIR OF DIMES

In August 1993 I was invited to give two presentations at the annual meeting of the Transpersonal Psychology Association in the Asilomar conference center in Pacific Grove, California. The theme of the conference was "New Paradigms in Psychology." For one

presentation, I was asked to introduce an audience of hundreds of people to shamanism as an example of one of these new paradigms.

My plan was not only to talk about shamanism, but also to give everyone the opportunity to take a shamanic journey to the Upper World so that they could get a real taste of the power of shamanic work. Frankly I was not sure that these hundreds of persons, sitting in rows of chairs, would succeed, but I thought it was worth a try.

I silently asked my spirits to help me in impressing the audience about the reality of spirits. They replied that I should have the lecture hall's lights turned off and then to take two large quartz crystals out of my bag. I knew from my experience in shamanism that when used correctly, quartz crystals have the effect of amplifying whatever spirit power is being put into them.

After the lecture hall was completely dark, I called silently for the help of the spirits and activated the crystals in an ancient way. In the darkness they briefly glowed with a faint light. At that moment, there was a scream in the audience. I asked that the lights be turned on. Then I saw a woman standing in the audience, waving her outstretched right hand.

I asked her to come to one of the standing microphones in the aisles of the auditorium and to share her experience. I expected her to share a few words about her subjective experience and then to sit down, to be replaced by some other volunteer doing the same. But I was in for a surprise.

At the microphone, she continued to hold her hand up high and announced that she had screamed because two dimes had suddenly materialized in her hand.

I was stunned and delighted at the same time, for I had never expected anything of this magnitude. I invited the woman, whom I had never met, to come up on the stage. She displayed the coins to me and everyone, to great applause. I told the audience that the two ten-cent pieces were so shiny they looked freshly minted.

I thanked her and, I must confess, felt rather self-satisfied about the public materialization. I thought the matter was done. However, as she left the stage to return to her seat, a man's voice called out from

the audience something I had completely overlooked. He shouted, “New pair o’ dimes!” He had perceived that it was not just a materialization but a message, a message reiterating the theme of the conference, “new paradigms.”[1]

There were more than four hundred witnesses to this event. A few years ago, the same woman approached me at a conference and reminded me who she was. She said she had kept the two dimes ever since, and pulled them out of her purse to show me again. They still looked new and shiny.

MIRACLE 2: RECEIVING AN “IMPOSSIBLE” HEALING AND SPEAKING IN HAWAIIAN

In successful shamanic healing work, miracles are almost routine events when the spirits wish to intercede. They particularly like to help a shaman who is their lineal descendant and are of even greater service if the patient is also helping that shaman in some way. An additional plus, but not necessary, is for the patient to be a lineal descendant, too.

In the early 1990s I was diagnosed by three different eye specialists as having macular degeneration. They all agreed that the condition was irreversible. By the late 1990s the doctors found it was getting worse and concluded that nothing could be done.

Since my wife Sandra and I were planning a vacation on the Big Island of Hawaii, one of my students suggested that we visit an elderly Hawaiian shaman-priest on the Kona coast, a spiritual kahuna with whom she was acquainted, to ask him for help. It seemed like the right thing to do. I was also curious to meet the man, Lanakila Brandt, who, although half-German in descent, had converted completely to the Hawaiian religion and reputedly was one of the last five authentic spiritual kahunas left on the Islands.

We found him in the small community of Captain Cook, so named because it was a few miles from Kealakakua Bay, where the famous eighteenth-century British explorer and navigator made his initial landing in Hawaii and was later killed.

Lanakila generously agreed to treat my eye condition if I followed a daily schedule that he outlined. For five mornings and evenings, as I lay silently on my back, he prayed over me in front of an altar of leaf- and flower-bedecked wooden images of traditional Hawaiian gods.

I experienced nothing eventful until the fifth and last evening, when I felt the spirit of a deceased person entering my consciousness and showing me a scene in color. We (the spirit and I merged together) were looking southward down at a bay. I guessed that it was the nearby Kealakakua Bay and that we were partway up the cliff overlooking it. Before me on the water were two square-riggers at anchor. I did not know at that time that Captain Cook had come in two ships, but I thought, *Captain Cook!* and wondered if the spirit was that of a British seaman or even Cook himself. Then I wondered if the spirit was Hawaiian. Still, I was not sure.

Next something very strange happened: the spirit began speaking clearly to me in a language I did not understand. I did not even know if it was Hawaiian, since the only words I had learned in that language, like any visitor to the Islands, were “aloha” and “mahalo” (thank you). But the spirit, who clearly seemed male, kept repeating himself over and over, apparently insistent that I remember his words. I gradually memorized the message with some difficulty, as I had to focus on ignoring the background prayers being chanted by Lanakila. I kept repeating the words silently to myself as I lay on my back with closed eyes, hoping that when the ritual was over Lanakila could tell me whether or not they resembled Hawaiian. As soon as Lanakila’s healing work was done, I wrote the words down, explained to him what had happened, and read them aloud. The words were:

Hele hele aku i ka pono.

“This a very good sign,” he smiled broadly. “You have just spoken Hawaiian. What you said literally is this: *Go! Go! Forward to everything positive*. The meaning of this message is: ‘Go ahead with full force (with your life); everything is positive, for you are on the straight path.’ ”

Recently I sent the words the spirit gave me, together with Lanakila’s translation of them, to a professor of Hawaiian language at

the University of Hawaii (Hilo) to check the accuracy of the sentence I received and its translation. He replied, "… the Hawaiian is quite correct and even includes the directional particle, *aku*." The only suggestion he made was to add "a comma after the first hele." Of course, the spirit never told me about a comma![2]

I asked Lanakila, "What is the straight path?" for the phrase was new to me.

"It is the moral path, the correct path," Lanakila said, adding, "You have been blessed with support for your life, and the outcome for your eyes should be good. Keep in mind that the cure may take a few months."

Indeed, several months later when I asked my eye doctors to recheck my ocular condition, they could find no evidence of any macular degeneration whatsoever. Such a reversal, they said, was impossible, and the only explanation was that my previous diagnoses were wrong (although the diagnoses had been made repeatedly for almost a decade!).[3]

About three years later I came across a new book on Fiji (another Pacific Island culture) by Richard Katz, titled *The Straight Path of the Spirit*. The title jumped out at me, for I had not found any mention of "the straight path" since that meeting with Lanakila. In Katz's book I discovered that what the spirit had told me was consistent with what other Pacific Islanders knew, and furthermore, the concept was central to their spiritual culture.

MIRACLE 3: SPEAKING IN FINNISH

When shamans merge with or "embody" a helping spirit, it is only natural that they talk in that spirit's language. What is remarkable, as in my case as a patient in Hawaii, is that the words can be translated if someone is present who knows the language.

Here is another personal example. In one of my courses, helping spirits are invited to merge with participants in order to provide them with healing power. To the beat of drums, each participant patiently waits until a healing spirit unites with him or her and causes the

participant to start singing and dancing to bring healing power to others. They do this one by one.

On this particular occasion, a helping spirit merged with me. As usual, when I experienced its healing power, I ("we") started singing and dancing spontaneously within the circle of the group. As I did so, words came out of my mouth that I could not understand, repeating themselves with great forcefulness until my dance ended and I finally sat down.

At the end of the session, there was some sharing by participants. One of them, a Finnish woman, raised her hand and asked me if I knew what I had been singing. I did not have any idea. She then said that I had been singing in Finnish and repeating the phrase, "No more university!" This caused a great deal of astonishment and laughter in the group, since the students knew that I had recently rejected university life as a professor.

And, of course, I knew no Finnish.[4]

MIRACLE 4: SPEAKING IN ARCHAIC NORWEGIAN

As in the example above, what seems impossible or miraculous to the nonshaman is really quite simple and even routine when one knows that (1) spirits really exist, and (2) if the spirits wish to, they can speak through shamans. While instructing an advanced initiations course in 2008, I asked for a volunteer for a demonstration of these realities. Amanda Foulger, one of our faculty members, kindly agreed.

I asked her if she knew the nationalities of her ancestors. She said that they were primarily English, secondly Scottish, and distantly Norwegian. Of these nationalities the only language she knew was English, being a Californian.

Then I asked her to enter the shamanic state of consciousness, or SSC, with the aid of repetitious drumming, to merge with an ancestor from the 1500s or earlier, and to have the unknown ancestor speak through her. All this was in the presence of some forty people.

After a couple minutes of drumming, Amanda stood up, and the drumming stopped. She began to speak loudly, slowly waving her

arms back and forth. After she finished and sat down, the students looked at each other, puzzled, for her words seemed completely unintelligible.

However, one person in the group, a student familiar with Scandinavian languages, raised her hand. She said that Amanda had spoken in an archaic form of Norwegian. Furthermore, she said, the spirit speaking though Amanda was apparently on a hunt and had been discussing with a companion in which direction they should go. This astonished all the students, including Amanda herself, for she did not know any Norwegian whatsoever.[5]

MIRACLE 5: A CURE THE PHYSICIAN SAID HE COULD NEVER PROVIDE

This next report was written by Ken Emerson, who acted as a demonstration client in a group practice known as "the spirit boat." Sometimes called the "spirit canoe" or "spirit raft," this practice has long existed in one form or another among peoples on the Northwest Coast of North America, in the Northwest Amazon, in Australia, and in Indonesia. Here is what he says:

> Early in 2004 I was diagnosed with alpha 1-antitrypsin deficiency (A1AT). A1AT is synthesized in the liver, and when deficient, results in emphysema. Eventually damage occurs to the liver, resulting in cirrhosis. Replacement therapy is available through weekly IV infusions of the A1AT protein. I had been receiving these infusions since 2004; however, my lung function continued to decrease.
>
> In April 2011 I attended the Foundation's two-week intensive workshop with Alicia Gates and Amanda Foulger. I was chosen as a client for the spirit boat exercise. At the conclusion of the session I immediately knew I had received a healing. My lungs were clear, breathing was no longer labored, and my heart was beating regular and strong.
>
> After arriving home I consulted my pulmonologist for a

scheduled appointment. He conducted all the regular tests, including chest X-ray, spirometry, and blood workup. He was amazed at the results, believing that the equipment had failed! He ran the tests again only to find the same results as before. The chest X-ray showed virtually no signs of emphysema, although some tissue damage was still apparent. The spirometry reading revealed lung function at 82 percent of normal; the previous reading was 77 percent. The A1AT protein level had increased from 74 to 77 (normal is 90–200).

My doctor could not medically explain the reasons for these drastic changes. As I was smiling like a child on Christmas morning, he asked me what was going on. Without revealing the details, I related the results of my healing from the loving compassionate spirits. He just shook his head and said I had received something that he could never provide. He discontinued the IV infusion therapy, and we scheduled a follow-up appointment for six months later.

At the next appointment the same tests were conducted. This time the results were: no signs of emphysema, lung function at *112 percent* of normal, and A1AT protein level at 80. We will continue to monitor my condition every six months. This time when I left the office, we were both smiling![6]

In the examples given in this chapter, the spirits were not only educating us about their existence, but they were also showing their ability to heal and help. I remember a popular book that was first published some years ago called *A Course in Miracles*. I resisted the temptation to call this chapter (from the shaman's perspective) "Of Course They're Miracles!"

3

The Search

Shamans are delusional and quite possibly schizophrenic, I learned in the early 1950s as an anthropology student at the University of California in Berkeley. The evidence offered was that shamans claimed that they could see and talk with spirits, and even use them to heal people. However, since shamans sometimes actually did seem to effect cures, they deserved more study if it was done from a psychological perspective. Walter Cline was a quiet dissenter regarding this purely psychological view of shamans.

Such a perception of shamans was a heritage of Western prejudices stretching back centuries to the Inquisition's ridicule and persecution of shamans, then in Europe called "witches," which they are still called in northern Finland. The Inquisition's methods of torture and execution were gradually replaced by the more subtle pressures of secularism that accompanied the rise of science during the Age of "Enlightenment" in the eighteenth century.

In that century one of the last vestiges of European shamanism, visualization methods, still survived to some degree in folk medicine, known as "journeys of the soul." However, eighteenth-century academicians declared that there was no scientific proof of the existence of the soul. Therefore, the emerging medical establishment decreed that visualization for healing had to be abandoned on those grounds. The "heresy" of visualized travel did not return to European medicine until Freud in the late nineteenth century asked a patient to "imagine" himself in a train going through the countryside and to

describe what he saw.

The academic reluctance to take seriously souls, spirits, and shamans continues to the present time.[1] Not having actually tried shamanic methods themselves, even sympathetic anthropologists have tended to view shamanism not in terms of first-hand knowledge but within the framework of Western preconceptions or paradigms.

Although perhaps no longer ethnocentric, most of these scholars still tended to see shamans through the lens of cognicentrism, which is a tendency to judge the validity of other people's experiences in altered states of consciousness without having experienced those states oneself.[2]

Without adequate participant observation, such scholars were liable to inconclusively put shamans and shamanism into currently fashionable theoretical pigeonholes. While "participant observation" was given lip service in anthropology as a desired field method to arrive at an accurate understanding of native behavior and practices, no anthropologist was known to have attempted it in the case of shamanism prior to the latter half of the twentieth century.

At the same time, the shamans' feats of healing and unbelievable journeys to other worlds both fascinated and perplexed Western scholars. The armchair French theorist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl proposed in his early twentieth-century book *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* that "native" accounts of their incredible experiences were indeed genuine, but that such peoples were prisoners of a prerational "primitive" mind.[3] That this opinion has not entirely disappeared is evidenced by the more recent book of another influential armchair writer, Julian Jaynes, who theorized at length about the consciousness of preagricultural peoples without investigating the consciousness of "preagricultural" peoples, hunters and gatherers, who still existed on the planet.[4]

Lévy-Bruhl's opinion about tribal peoples and shamans was perhaps relatively charitable compared to those that were subsequently expressed for decades in the twentieth century by much of the psychoanalytic community, where shamans' experiences tended to be viewed as "hallucinations" and the shamans themselves as actively

psychotic or psychotics “in partial remission.”[5] Indeed, Weston La Barre, an anthropologist heavily influenced by Freudian psychoanalytic theory, argued that virtually all mystical experiences, including those of shamanism, were manifestations of neurosis or psychosis.[6]

Carl Jung stands apart from such a view and from Freud in making what he himself terms “journeys” to a lower world,[7] and being educated there about the reality of spirits by Elijah, who tells him, “We are real, not symbols,” and again, “You may call us symbols.… But we are just as real as your fellow men. You invalidate nothing and solve nothing by calling us symbols.… We are certainly what you call real.”[8] However, it is notable that Jung wrote these words only secretly in his *Red Book*, which was not made public until 2009, almost half a century after his death.

Undoubtedly the foremost twentieth-century figure in the scholarly rehabilitation of shamanism, and in the recognition of its virtually pan-human occurrence, was Mircea Eliade, who published the first version of his classic book *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* in French in 1951. Eliade proposed that although local practices had their own variations, a key consistent feature was the shaman’s journey to other worlds in a trance (“ecstasy”).

In his book, which remains the outstanding general reference work on shamanism, Eliade suggested that shamanism was the progenitor of all other spiritual systems and religions, although he made it clear that shamanism itself was a methodology, not a religion. However, even Eliade was not immune from the mental-illness view of shamans. As late as 1951, just five years before my first Amazonian fieldwork, he took the position that “the majority of shamans are (or have been) psychopaths.”[9]

Thus, from the scholars’ “psychological” perspective, shamans were not “liars and charlatans” but merely insane! The shamans had the good fortune, however, to be born into “crazy” cultures, where they could be accepted. They could even employ their craziness by catering to the mass delusions of the people among whom they lived by being shamans.

Such “crazy” cultures, of course, are the “primitive” tribal ones, in contrast to our own “civilized” Western culture whose manifestations of presumed sanity include two world wars, the Holocaust, and other wholesale acts of genocide, urban violence, and the accelerating destruction of the planetary life-support system.

Another thing I learned as an anthropology graduate student, but not from Walter Cline, was that fieldworkers were to keep a skeptical “objectivity.” Out of paternalistic good manners or, perhaps more practically, to avoid alienating their native informants, the anthropologists’ skepticism was not expressed directly to the indigenous peoples, but only upon returning home to the academic community, where Western psychological and sociological assumptions were used to explain what “really” was going on in the native cultures. This somewhat hypocritical approach was considered entirely proper. Implicit in all this was the patronizing assumption of the superiority of modern Western knowledge and that the natives’ function was to be subjects for study, rather than to be possible teachers of us in the West.

I was similarly taught the dangers of “going native” in the field, something that “unstable personalities” might be tempted to do. Examples that I was given of ethnologists or cultural anthropologists who had “gone over the edge” included Frank Cushing of the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution. About a century ago, Cushing stopped publishing on Zuni religion after becoming formally initiated into their secret societies, thereby depriving the Western world of his discoveries. He also achieved the rank of First War Chief and generally became a scandal for many in the profession by failing to “keep his distance” and thereby not fulfilling his academic obligations.[10]

FROM THE IVORY TOWER TO THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

It was with this academic background that I engaged in my first fieldwork in the Upper Amazon in 1956–57. My intention was to go beyond the frontier of Western colonization to experience life in a

still-unconquered Native American tribal society. I was almost a century too late for this opportunity in North America, so I chose South America, and specifically the Jívaro proper or Untsuri Shuar of eastern Ecuador, who were famous for their ability to resist would-be conquerors over the centuries. My anthropological responsibility and intention was to do an accurate ethnography or description of their total culture, for their sensationalistic practice of "head-shrinking" had resulted in many lurid, inaccurate, and prejudicial accounts of their life and ideas.[11]

In 1956, shortly after I arrived among the Shuar, I noticed a man who wandered in the forest day and night, seeing and talking with spirits. Having just come from the lofty towers of academia, I thought, *Aha, I have one!* So I asked the people if he was a shaman. They replied, no, he was crazy!

Although they viewed him as crazy, they did not consider him to be having hallucinations. After all, almost everyone in that society had taken the native hallucinogens and knew the spirits were real because they had seen them, too.

The reason they considered him crazy was that he could not turn off his contact with the spirits. He was useless to his people. Their shamans, in contrast, consciously chose when they would interact with the spirits and did so with defined purpose to help others. This was the beginning of my real education about shamanism.

Soon I learned that I was in a society not only of warriors, but of shamans. The shamans numbered in the hundreds, and their healing and other activities permeated daily life everywhere. I found them fascinating. They introduced me to concepts of reality far more exciting than anything I had ever encountered before.

Much of this seemed connected to their use of consciousness-changing plants and plant mixtures. Both the shamans and the nonshamans employed a variety of hallucinogens, or psychedelics, to see and interact with otherwise invisible spirits in an invisible alternate reality.

Perhaps no indigenous people in the world used a wider assortment of psychedelics. There was a very mild one for babies to help them

gain contact with the beneficial spirits of the hidden reality; there were ones for children, both boys and girls; there was one for hunting dogs so that they, too, could gain the help of the spirits; there was one especially for shamans, and another for the vision quest. If a young boy misbehaved, his parents might force him to take a psychedelic to straighten him out; the idea was that he would respect the authority of his parents more if he discovered that they really knew what they were talking about when they spoke of the spirits and the hidden reality.[12]

My dissertation project, for which I had received a grant, had nothing to do with shamanism or psychedelics, so I had to focus my investigations on other topics. Twice during that first fieldwork among the Jívaro in 1956–57, shamans offered me the opportunity to take their mind-altering potions and plants. I was tempted but held back, concerned about even slight brain damage. A clear-thinking mind was the most important resource I had for writing a successful doctoral dissertation.

Yet, as my months passed, something happened subtly to my spiritual orientation. I was consciously adopting some of the Shuar assumptions about reality, including the reality of spirits. With the river crossing incident, I really started to wake up to the importance of acquiring spirit power.[13] Now I found myself silently invoking the protection of guardian spirits on the occasions when the Indians' continuous feuds, raids, ambushes, and killings placed me in physical danger. The spirits' presence felt tangible and reassuring, although still invisible to me.

Naturally I did not communicate this slight shift in my Weltanschauung in letters I wrote to my doctoral dissertation committee back at the university. Indeed, during this first field year, I basically kept my "proper" distance as an ethnographer, remaining much more an observer than a participant. When I returned to the United States a year later, the personal spiritual perceptions that I had experienced in eastern Ecuador gradually receded from my consciousness and seemed more like faint memories.

Then, four years later, on another expedition to the Upper Amazon

for the American Museum of Natural History, I actually crossed the threshold fully. On a fateful night in 1961 among the Conibo Indians of Eastern Peru, I drank the shamans' psychedelic plant brew, ayahuasca.[14] The Conibo required it of me before they would describe their own spiritual experiences and religion. I cooperated, determined not to repeat my failure to drink this potion among the Shuar.

My visionary experiences that ensued among the Conibo were not only extremely powerful but coincided incredibly closely with those that the Conibo later revealed to me. I began to realize that the cultural theories I had been taught as an anthropology student were inadequate to explain this consistency of experience, apparently regardless of culture.

This discovery radically challenged my Western views of reality and started me on a truly serious search for knowledge. While I was still with the Conibo, this search took the form of training in their methods of shamanism, using ayahuasca and shamanic song as nightly catalysts to journey into sacred realms and to work with the spirits. There was an excitement and fulfillment in my life that had never existed before, for I was discovering and exploring a whole additional reality, the reality of a hidden universe.

Eventually I had to leave my Conibo friends to return to the United States in 1961 to take a position at Berkeley. I was also leaving two North American missionaries who had told their mission board they would no longer teach the Bible to the Indians and wished to serve only as medical missionaries, for they recognized that the shamans' daily revelations were spiritually more authoritative than the old stories in the Bible. They were Dick and Dorothy Kendig, for whom I used the pseudonyms "Bob and Millie" in *The Way of the Shaman*.[15] On my way out of the jungle, I stopped by their mission station to say good-bye. Dick told me that he had just been to the river town of Pucallpa, where he ran into a bearded "beatnik" from New York who had just taken ayahuasca, too. It was Allen Ginsberg. I was sorry to have missed him, since he was the only other "gringo" I had ever heard of who had drunk the brew.[16] I wondered how his experiences compared with mine. I sought him out when I returned to San

Francisco but learned that he had left for India. It would be some time before we could compare experiences.

In the San Francisco Bay Area I found myself unexpectedly becoming involved in a small but rapidly growing network of adventurous psychologists, poets, musicians, botanists, chemists, and bohemians whose psychedelic experiences with LSD, Mexican mushrooms, peyote, and mescaline were engendering great excitement and discussion. There were now people in Western culture who were beginning to understand something of what the shamans already knew. They were the avant garde of what would be later known as the Psychedelic Sixties. Allen Ginsberg finally returned from India, astonishing me with his long hair, the beginning of long hair in the American counterculture. On my visits to him and others at the place he stayed on Gough Street in San Francisco, I began to feel that I had found a second home outside academia.

Most of these early-sixties fellow explorers of consciousness and hidden realities were well-educated, intelligent, creative, and articulate individuals concentrated in the San Francisco region, as nurturing an environment for them as it had been for the immediately preceding Beat Generation. It was exciting to spend time with them and to see the rapid evolution of the New Age movement.

In early 1963 I gave a public lecture in Berkeley under the auspices of the University of California on “Drugs and Reality in the Upper Amazon.” At that time, psychedelics or hallucinogens were not yet a “dangerous” academic subject. In the talk I explained that the Shuar (then called the Jívaro) believed that the only real reality was that seen with the aid of the ingested hallucinogen ayahuasca, and that ordinary daily life was by comparison a “lie.” Unbeknownst to me, the talk’s content was summarized in a newsletter sent to all campuses of the university.

As a result, in November 1963, at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco, I was approached by a stocky, well-dressed, Latino-looking gentleman who introduced himself as Carlos Castaneda and said that he was a student at UCLA. He wanted to talk with me about what I had said in that

lecture in Berkeley. He explained that he was having difficulty organizing his field notes from working with a Yaqui Indian and expressed interest in the dichotomy of realities on which I had lectured.

We retired to a quiet corner to converse. I found that Carlos was the first anthropologist I had met who was enthusiastic about the realms that I had been penetrating, and who seemed to share my serious respect of the indigenous knowledge connected to them.

During the ensuing weeks he often drove to Berkeley from Los Angeles to share thoughts and experiences. Our discussions helped develop the usefulness of a concept of two realities for Westerners. In his future publications, Carlos formalized the dichotomy into two simple terms, “ordinary” and “nonordinary” reality, which I have associated respectively with the “ordinary state of consciousness” and the “shamanic state of consciousness.”[17] Encouraged by at last knowing an anthropologist with whom I could share experiences involving shamanism and hallucinogens, I was stimulated subsequently to revisit the Shuar three more times.[18]

Carlos had a great sense of humor and a dramatic earnestness. He told wonderful stories about his encounters with peyote and a Yaqui man, a *brujo* named don Juan. Sandra Harner and I encouraged him to start writing them down. Within just a few weeks, he brought us the first written account. It was such an impressive and presumably accurate ethnographic narration that we encouraged him to bring more.

As his visits continued, and the possible chapters accumulated, it was clear that Carlos had now produced a book-length manuscript. We helped him get it to Grove Press in New York, which immediately turned it down, something its owner reportedly later deeply regretted. It was, of course, finally published in 1968 by the University of California Press under the title *The Teachings of Don Juan* after many difficulties and drama—but that is another story for another time. One thing was clear, however: popular Western indifference to indigenous spiritual and philosophical knowledge was about to change.

Even before then, after the 1964 publication in English of Eliade's 1951 book on shamanism, interest in the subject was rapidly developing in the United States, especially in California. This interest was stimulated significantly by the widespread use of psychedelics such as LSD in the 1960s.

Prior to 1964, few of these American psychedelic explorers had any idea that they were rediscovering territory familiar to shamans for thousands of years. Not surprisingly, they sought frameworks for their experiences in the well-known spiritual traditions of Eastern civilizations, especially Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism. They spoke of "trips" rather than "journeys," and few of them had heard of shamans or their journeys.

At the same time that Eliade's book appeared, a strange thing was starting to happen to the psychedelic "hippie" explorers of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. Their trips with LSD and other mind-altering substances led many of them to conclude that they were reincarnations of deceased American Indians. Accordingly, quite a few began to wear beads, buckskins, and feathers. From a shamanic perspective, many had probably indeed experienced merging with spirits in their trips, especially spirits calling for recognition.

Meanwhile back in Berkeley, I attempted to communicate my ayahuasca and other shamanic experiences to my fellow anthropologists. They tried to be sympathetic and act interested, but I came to realize that my experiences collided as much with their secular paradigms as they had with the missionaries' religious views. Largely dropping my attempts to communicate the ineffable, I turned instead to the stacks of the great university library in Berkeley to find kindred spirits, both literally and figuratively.

At first I focused on searching for overlooked evidence of tribal use of hallucinogens, for the powerful effects of ayahuasca, and later of datura. My experiences with those substances, and the use of other plants in native North, Central, and South America, made me think that human spiritual experiences must have originated from the use of psychotropic plants; in other words, that the plants were the fundamental source of religious experience and, thus, of religion and

shamanism. Convinced that the use and impact of such plant substances had not been taken seriously by students of the origin of religion, I dug into the ethnological and historical cross-cultural literature with great curiosity and anticipation.

I found considerable evidence that shamans in some parts of the world had indeed used psychedelic plants to achieve the experience of another reality. Such plants also seemed to lie behind the stories of flying "witches," werewolves, vampires, and zombies. Some of these discoveries were embodied in my article on the use of psychedelic plants in the survival of shamanism (then "witchcraft") in late medieval and Renaissance Europe.[19] The article was part of my edited book, *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*, composed primarily of papers read at a symposium of the American Anthropological Association meeting in 1965. Carlos Castaneda was among those in the symposium. His paper, unlike the others, was never published. It was his decision.

Others were simultaneously engaged in a similar scholarly search set off especially by Gordon Wasson's experience with the "magic mushroom" among the Mazatec in Mexico,[20] by Albert Hofmann's publications following his discovery of LSD,[21] by Aldous Huxley's accounts of his experiences with mescaline,[22] and by Timothy Leary's introduction of LSD to the cloistered undergraduate students of Harvard.[23]

Thus, the assumption among many of us in the early and mid-1960s was that "the drugs did it," and therefore various articles were published ascribing the origin of the "religious experience" to the ancient ingestion of psychedelic plants.[24] The prevalent experimentation with LSD during those years reinforced the view that an ingested bioactive substance was the "secret" key to the shamans' experience of entering another reality.

In 1968 the first books by Castaneda added to that general opinion,[25] as had the Wassons' 1957 opus *Mushrooms, Russia, and History*, in which they ascribed the visionary experiences of Siberian shamans to their ingestion of the psychedelic fly agaric mushroom *(Amanita muscaria)*.[26]

However, as a result of my cross-cultural research, by the late 1960s I was beginning to conclude reluctantly that shamans in most of the world's indigenous cultures did their work without the appreciable use of psychedelic substances. It was becoming inescapably obvious to me that throughout the world, percussion sound, most notably by drumming, was far more widely used than psychedelics by indigenous shamans. Yet it was difficult to accept the possibility that the shamanic use of the drum could profoundly alter one's state of consciousness.

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF THE DRUM

Starting in 1948 at Zuni pueblo in New Mexico, I was awed by the effect of repetitive ceremonial drumming in a sacred context and, in fact, had a truly religious experience at Zuni. In the early 1950s I was exposed to the enchanting effects of Mohave and Cahuilla rattles, and of wooden foot drums in Northern California sacred "roundhouse" ceremonies.[27]

Then in the 1960s I found drumming being used in a specifically shamanic healing context among the Coast Salish people of Puget Sound in western Washington State, although no journeying was involved. Gradually, my cross-cultural reading in shamanism forced me to conclude that shamans in most of the world's cultures did not ingest or use psychotropic plants in order to change consciousness.

I bought a Pueblo-type double-headed drum in the 1960s and decided to experiment with it for journeying. Much to my pleasant surprise, I discovered that steady, repetitive drumming immediately altered my state of consciousness. I could make shamanic journeys without psychedelics! I should not have been surprised, however. Shamans, as usual, knew what they were doing, benefiting from millennia of experimentation.

Early in my personal experiments, I found that a steady, monotonous beat of about 205 to 220 times a minute was the most effective for making journeys. At that time, however, I lacked information as to whether this was the same frequency of beat used

by the drumming shamans of Siberia for their journey work. Then, a few years later, a four-minute tape recording of a Siberian shaman drumming was "bootlegged" to me from the Soviet Union, where shamanism was illegal. (See Plate 2.) I was excited to find that their drumbeats were in the same range as mine.

Years later, during my first visit to the Soviet Union in 1984, Yuri Simchenko, a Russian ethnographer who had spent twenty-eight seasons of fieldwork in Siberia, told me that the real Siberian shamans normally employed only the drum to change their state of consciousness, rather than the psychoactive *Amanita muscaria* mushroom. The mushroom, Simchenko reported, was mainly used by nonshamans who have been unable to journey successfully with the drum alone. Also, he told me it is usually difficult to maintain the discipline necessary for shamanic work when the Amanita spirit takes over the body.

The Chukchee of eastern Siberia are well known for sometimes ingesting the Amanita. However, the great Russian ethnologist Waldemar Bogoras in 1907 wrote in his classic work on the Chukchee: "The single means used by the Chukchee shamans, novice or experienced, for communication with 'spirits' is the beating of the drum and singing."[28]

When the Siberian shamans begin to beat the drum for the early portion of their journeys, it is in a steady, monotonous rhythm. This tends to be replaced with more irregular drumbeats as the shamans merge with specific spirits in their journeys and engage in adventures in nonordinary reality.[29]

Very soon I concluded that monotonous percussion sound, or "auditory (or 'sonic') driving,"[30] done in conjunction with shamanic methods, could yield shamanic results in many ways comparable to those achieved with psychedelics. For example, the ayahuasca-based shamanic extraction healings with which I was familiar in the Amazon were accomplished equally well by Indian peoples on the West Coast of North America using only auditory driving, as in the form of wooden "clappers" and stamping staffs in Northern California,[31] or in the form of drumming, as in the Puget Sound area,

or through the repetitious use of hand bells, as among the Indian Shakers of Oregon and Washington.[32]

This conclusion was a major personal discovery, for it meant that shamanic spiritual experiences could no longer be dismissed as simply due to the effects of drugs. Indeed, the implications were enormous, as they suggested that drums and drugs were different doorways to the same spiritual realms.

With regard to shamanic journeying to other worlds, I still had not found anyone in western North America using the drum or other auditory driving device for this purpose. Much later I learned that drumming was being used for shamanic ascension among some Canadian Athapaskan peoples.[33]

Worldwide, it appeared that the most common vehicle for the shaman's journey was auditory driving in the form of simple, monotonous percussion sound. Although this was usually produced by the drum, in some places other percussion instruments were used, such as click sticks used by most Aboriginal peoples of Australia. In the wet tropics of Southeast Asia, shamans normally used gongs and metal bangles instead of drums.

In some regions of the world, such as in parts of North America, Mexico, South America, and Siberia,[34] the rattle was employed to provide the monotonous percussion sounds, often in conjunction with the ingestion of a mild psychedelic such as peyote, or with consciousness-changing Piptadenia snuff and certain varieties of tobacco.[35] It was clear that auditory driving in shamanism took many forms in addition to the use of the drum.

One such form was the use of the musical bow, and of its metal relative, the mouth-harp, both of which produce a repetitive, percussive twanging sound and are used by shamans. Those in Mongolia and Siberia today generally prefer the mouth-harp, while the Upper Amazonian Shuar still use the musical bow (see Plate 3a). The fiber string of the musical bow is plucked at the shaman's open mouth, the mouth serving as the resonance chamber for the bow's percussive sound.

The musical bow is often almost inaudible to others nearby, but its

repetitious percussion is strong enough inside the head to permit the Shuar shaman to change consciousness. A half-human figure, presumably a shaman merged with the Bison Spirit, is recognized by archaeologists as playing the musical bow among the wall paintings in the famous Upper Paleolithic cave of *Les Trois Frères* in France (see Plate 3b). If the painting represents what a shaman was doing inside the cave, the quiet musical bow would have been a good auditory-driving choice, compared to the drum, to avoid dislodging rocks from the cave's ceiling.

My personal discovery of the effectiveness of the drum for shamanic journeying was, of course, just a rediscovery of what shamans the world over had long known. For example, the drum is called the "shaman-horse" among the Soyot people in Tuva, on the southern edge of Siberia, because of its ability to help the shaman fly to the Upper and Lower Worlds,[36] the beats of the drum resembling the beats of a horse's hooves.[37] The drum not only helps one travel shamanically but stimulates visionary experiences. Thus, the Sami ("Lapp") people of northern Scandinavia call the drum literally "a thing out of which pictures come" *(gavados)*.[38]

I began to call the altered state accompanying the drumming (and also psychedelics) the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC). It is not a naïve altered state of consciousness but a state that includes knowledge of shamanic purpose and discipline, such as that involved in helping and healing others. The SSC has differing intensities, from light to deep, and can have different effects, particularly if a properly prepared powerful hallucinogen like ayahuasca (yagé) is used.[39] From a shamanic point of view, the spirits of such plants not only have power, but they also have their own personalities and messages, which impinge significantly on the nature of the experience. Auditory driving in many ways does not carry such influences.

In the 1970s, searching the scientific literature for an explanation of the mental effects of drumming, I was able to locate only three significant publications in English on the subject. This was both surprising and disappointing, since even in the Western world, as we all know, drums continue to be used to alter one's state of

consciousness for entertainment and recreation, mourning processions, and military marches. Perhaps drumming has been such a natural part of our lives that we have lacked the psychological distance to wonder why.

Two of the three publications I found were by Andrew Neher, who in the early 1960s pioneered the scientific study of the effects of drumming on brain wave patterns. As a result of his laboratory research, he concluded that drumming produces unusual changes in the central nervous system. He called this "auditory driving,"[40] which I sometimes alternatively name "sonic driving." Two factors he noted seemed particularly important: (1) a drum beat contains many frequencies and thus electrically stimulates a variety of sensory and motor regions of the brain simultaneously; and (2) a drum beat mainly contains low frequencies and thus can be loud and provide great energy input without causing the pain and damage that would result from high-frequency sounds of a similar amplitude. Neher also proposed a connection to ceremonial and religious experience.[41]

The third publication was by a psychiatrist, Wolfgang Jilek, who had studied the therapeutic effects of the shamanistic Spirit Dances of the Salish Indian people of British Columbia and Washington. He and a colleague found that the Salish deerskin drums were predominantly beaten four to seven times per second during shamanistic initiation procedures. He noted that this was in the theta-wave EEG frequency range, a range that "is expected to be most effective in the production of trance states."[42] This was faster than the tempo range I had found effective for journeying, but both practices shared a loud, monotonous beat.

Despite the work of Neher and Jilek, the effect of the drum in altering one's state of consciousness remains a subject of controversy among academics, and lately it has been fashionable to criticize Neher's findings, as did Gilbert Rouget, whose position in turn has been usefully criticized by Gabe Turow.[43] New scientific research by psychologists Melinda Maxfield and Sandra Harner supports the view that significant psychological and physiological effects are produced by shamanic drumming.[44]

In any case, persons interested in practicing shamanism need not await the outcome of academic debates and scientific research. They need only listen to shamanic drumming for their journeys to discover for themselves its importance. The effectiveness of auditory, or sonic, driving for accessing another reality was only one of the innumerable discoveries made by shamans and other indigenous people. Later we will return to the use of the drum in shamanic journeying.

SONIC-OPTIC DRIVING

If the shaman is moving about, another type of tool is sometimes used in shamanic journeying. It is what I call the Siberian eye curtain. Hanging down over the eyes from a crown or headdress of shamans in Siberia and adjacent areas, a row of fringes helps shamans to see both realities simultaneously. When working, the shamans wearing these eye curtains typically swing their heads left and right, causing the perceptions of ordinary reality to be constantly interrupted by darkness.

These interruptions of sight reinforce the regular auditory interruptions of silence produced by the drum, as I found.

Just as shamanic drumming produces a result in consciousness that I am calling auditory driving, especially for journeying, the swinging eye-curtain fringes seem to constitute a kind of coexisting optic driving. The two together result in what might be called “auditory-optic” or, for syllabic economy, “sonic-optic” driving. The drumbeats and the swings of eye-curtain fringes “break up” ordinary reality, helping shamans pass through them to other worlds. (See Plate 4.) For this to work, however, the external light should be dim, so that light does not interfere with the visual imagery coming to the shaman.

CORE SHAMANISM

Over decades of my own practical experimentation, cross-cultural

research, and fieldwork, I gradually winnowed out underlying universal, near-universal, and common principles and practices of shamanism, including the use of auditory driving to alter the state of consciousness. Especially in the 1970s I actively developed methods for practicing and teaching these principles, continually refining and going farther with them. Partially this work was pursued within the development of my private practice of shamanic healing and divination, and partially it was done in response to requests from other persons for training in the methods of the shaman.

These underlying transcultural principles of shamanic practice provide the basis for what I named core shamanism. As I indicated in the introduction, core shamanism consists of the universal, near-universal, and common features of shamanism, together with journeys to other worlds, a distinguishing feature of shamanism. For most Westerners, learning and practicing core shamanism, including shamanic journeying, is a far more productive approach than imitating a shaman's practices in a single culture, for each culture has its own symbolism, mythology, and conceptual elaborations. If that is not your own culture, then those elaborations, specializations, and meanings will not be appropriate for you in the way they are appropriate for that particular indigenous people. In connection with this, anthropologist Joan Townsend carefully distinguished core shamanism from neo-shamanism.[45]

For more information, see "Principal Concepts of Core Shamanism" in Appendix D.

The hunger so many Westerners seem to have for this long-lost spiritual way is remarkable. In response to requests, I began teaching Westerners core shamanism for practical use, giving training workshops in the mid- and late 1970s in North America and Europe. I especially emphasized shamanic journeying with drumming, which I found to be of central importance in initiating Westerners into contact with the spirits, the essential ingredient in shamanism and shamanic healing.

Gradually the training workshops increased in frequency, complexity, and length. To meet the demand, during the last three

decades or so I have been assisted in the teaching of the workshops by former students who were invited to be members of the faculty of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, a nonprofit organization founded to save, study, and teach shamanism and shamanic healing worldwide.

Today presented by the international faculty of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, the teachings cover many shamanic practices besides journeying, including power animal retrieval, extraction healing, soul retrieval, divination, psychopomp work, depossession, and very advanced shamanic initiations that include a great many other practices. They are all taught within the framework of core shamanism.

4

Our World: Shamans and Spirits

Close your eyes,
then you will find the way.
—*from a Puyallup Indian myth*[1]

Based on archaeological and comparative ethnological evidence, shamanism is believed by many scholars to be at least 30,000 years old and quite possibly is more ancient. Without dispute, it is the most time-tested system for healing through the purposeful integration of mental, emotional, and spiritual capacities. Although the word "shaman" comes from the Tungusic-speaking peoples of Siberia and north China, the worldwide similarity of the basic practices led anthropologists to apply the term generically elsewhere.

Until the present century, shamanism was practiced on all inhabited continents by indigenous peoples, including such widely separated peoples as the Sami (formerly "Lapps") of northernmost Europe, the aboriginal peoples of Australia, the Kung Bushmen of southern Africa, and the indigenous peoples of North and South America. However, due to such factors as introduced disease, wars, missionization, and persecution, the numbers of indigenous shamans were drastically reduced in the last five centuries, commonly along with a radical erosion of their culture's shamanic knowledge. In the last few decades this situation has started to change.

SHAMANS

Definitions are often a contentious matter, particularly in the case of shamans and shamanism. What I offer now is what I have personally found useful in my work with shamans, and within shamanism, for half a century. The following words are not intended to satisfy everyone, or perhaps even most, but they are intended to communicate what I am talking about in this book.

While the work of shamans encompasses virtually the full gamut of known spiritual practices, shamanism is universally characterized by an intentional change in consciousness (Eliade's "ecstasy") to engage in purposeful two-way interaction with spirits. Its most distinctive feature, which is not universal, is the out-of-body journey to other worlds.[2] It should be noted that in some indigenous societies, there are shamans who do not journey at all, and others who journey only in the Middle World or, if they journey beyond the Middle World, may not go to both the Upper and Lower Worlds. What they all do share is disciplined interaction with spirits in nonordinary reality to help and heal others.

Whether journeying or not, shamans depend heavily upon the assistance of their tutelary entities, or helping spirits, with whom they interact in the altered state of consciousness that worldwide is most commonly achieved with the aid of auditory (sonic) driving. Both in traditional indigenous settings and in contemporary society, shamans work within a holistic framework. They address the spiritual side of illness in a complementary relationship with the nonspiritual treatment of illness and injury.

Shamans must be distinguished from sorcerers. Sorcerers are not healers and commonly cause pain and suffering.

THE TWO REALITIES

A basic assumption in shamanism is that there are two realities, and the perception of each depends upon one's state of consciousness. This assumption is explicit in core shamanism but usually is implicit in indigenous shamanism, where there is commonly not as much interest in a disciplined distinction between realities. Indeed, some

indigenous shamans I have known seemed to enjoy the drama and romance of a blurring between realities.

Shamans access another reality especially in order to work with helping spirits to heal, divine, and accomplish other tasks for their patients and clients. This other reality is accessed by entering the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC), as I described in *The Way of the Shaman*.[3] The SSC can range from light to deep and is most commonly entered temporarily with the help of auditory driving.

Those in the ordinary state of consciousness (OSC) perceive ordinary reality (OR); those in the SSC are able to enter into and perceive nonordinary reality (NOR). These states are both called realities because each is empirically encountered and has its own forms of knowledge and relevance to human existence.

NOR is not a consensual reality, and indeed if it were, shamanic practitioners would have no function, for it is their responsibility to perceive successfully what others do not. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the shamanic practitioner is the ability to move back and forth at will between these realities with discipline and purpose in order to heal and help others.

"SEEING" IN SHAMANISM

"Seeing" is an important aspect of shamanism and shamanic journeying. As Eliade remarks, " 'Seeing' a spirit … is a certain sign that one has in some sort obtained a 'spiritual condition,' that is, that one has transcended the profane condition of humanity."[4] The word "seer" in English may refer to the ancient European shamans, those who were "see-ers." Similarly, the Matsigenka Indians of the Upper Amazon call a shaman one "who sees."[5] At the same time, "seeing" is a gloss in shamanism for more than visualizing, for it refers to perceiving with all the senses, including hearing, touch, smell, and taste.

Shamans differ from those who believe in spirits, because they know from firsthand experience that spirits exist. They see the spirits, touch them, hear them, smell them, and converse with them. This is why in many tribal societies around the world, the shaman is referred

to not only as “one who sees” but also as “one who knows,” or as a “person of knowledge.” Shamans no more believe spirits exist than you believe your family, friends, and acquaintances exist. You know your family, friends, and acquaintances exist because you talk and otherwise interact with them daily. Similarly, shamans know spirits exist because they interact with them daily or, more often, nightly, for it is usually easier to see spirits in darkness. Also, darkness is an important medium for identifying spirits, for it eliminates the possibility of confusing them with the ordinary images of daylight reality.

The familiar concept of the “third eye” from Eastern spiritual practices crops up elsewhere. It is often known among Australian aboriginals, for example, as the “strong eye,” located similarly in the center of the forehead. Sometimes a quartz crystal, a uniquely important stone cross-culturally in shamanism, is pressed into that center to help the beginning shaman see shamanically more clearly.[6] In former times, a Paviotso shaman in America could carry a quartz crystal on the cave power quest described in Chapter 1 so as to be able afterward to “see through anything.”[7] The seeing of shamans is not restricted to perceiving in darkness but commonly extends to seeing through things that in ordinary reality appear to most people as opaque. In shamanic extraction healing work, one sees or senses the illness within the sick person.[8]

A power to “see through anything” is a common feature of shamanic experience. This power brings its own light to penetrate darkness and matter, as Knud Rasmussen notes for the Iglulik Eskimo:

> The first time a young shaman experiences this light, while sitting up on the bench [in the darkened igloo] invoking his helping spirits, it is as if the house in which he is suddenly rises; he sees far ahead of him, through mountains, exactly as if the earth were one great plain, and his eyes could reach the end of the earth. Nothing is hidden from him any longer.[9]

In shamanism, “seeing” also involves seeing with the heart, or

knowing in your heart that what you are perceiving is truth. This emotional certainty is fundamental to the experience of direct revelation and is one of the features that usually characterize shamanic seeing.

In 1968 I was discussing shamanic seeing with French ethnologist Jacques Lemoine, a specialist in the shamanism of the Hmong peoples of Laos. Although an outstanding fieldworker, he had never asked the shamans if they saw images, because they had already told him that they "saw with the heart." Therefore he assumed that no visual perception was involved. I urged him to interview one of his Hmong shaman friends further. Sure enough, a few months later he reported that they did indeed see images with their closed and covered eyes when they were doing their journeys and other work, and that they still said they saw with the heart, simply because emotional certainty was part of their direct revelations. Such an emotional certainty is also necessary for successful work in Western shamanic healing.

ARE SHAMANS BORN OR MADE?

For the Westerner, it is easy to assume that shamans practice their profession full-time. In fact, however, shamans usually spend most of their time doing ordinary work such as farming or hunting, food gathering and processing, and child-rearing. In the evenings, and upon request, they journey and do other shamanic work in a disciplined and controlled way. Their spiritual work in an altered state of consciousness is very intense. It is not possible even to eat a meal when doing it. So it is inconceivable that one could be working in this kind of altered state of consciousness all day on a regular basis. Shamans must be part-timers.

Persons may become shamans in many different ways. In Siberia, for example, shamans might inherit the power and knowledge through their families.[10] Elsewhere in Siberia, and in some places in native South America, persons might suffer a serious illness, such as smallpox, and be expected to die but then have a miraculous recovery.[11] Or perhaps it was a freak accident like a lightning strike that one survived. When such a thing happened, the community

members characteristically concluded that healing power had come to save the person. They then sometimes asked the power-blessed person, upon recovery, to help heal someone else who was sick. The recovered person, even if unsure of his or her ability, could hardly refuse relatives and friends in need. If, in response, he or she successfully intervened, a shaman could be born.

In some indigenous societies, children were watched to see if they showed signs of being directly in touch with the spiritual realms, such as when they spontaneously sang a song apparently received from the spirits, as among the Pomo of Native California. If such signs occurred, then the children's healing powers might be tested by the adults.[12] However, even in such cases the child was rarely recognized as a full-fledged shaman until becoming an adult. Shamanic practitioners worldwide were typically mature adults, usually with their own children.

In certain cultures, it was quite common to pay an established shaman for training. For example, East Greenland Eskimo shamans usually had several paid teachers.[13] Among the Shuar in eastern Ecuador, the only known way to become a shaman is to buy the power, in the form of spirit helpers, from another shaman.[14] The usual payment in the 1950s was in *shuar kuit*, or "Indian valuables." To pay a well-known shaman for a weeklong period of training and power transmission, a man might have to spend two or three years amassing enough feather headdresses, blowguns, curare blowgun dart poison, perhaps a hunting dog, and maybe even a muzzle-loading shotgun. Today shamanism remains strong among the Shuar, but the payment is usually in major amounts of Ecuadorian currency.

There are other ways, too, that one may become a shaman. In the Conibo tribe of eastern Peru, for example, the beginner, under the guidance of a shaman, may learn primarily from the spirit of a tall sacred tree (the ceiba).[15] In the old days among Inuit of the Arctic, usually one of the most valued ways to become a shaman was to be initiated by the spirits in extreme isolation while suffering. To achieve this, an apprentice, under the supervision of a shaman, might spend days alone in a miniature igloo in the dead of winter without any

heat, light, food, and little or no water, until the spirits brought enlightenment and healing power.[16]

Perhaps one of the most mysterious and distinctive ways of becoming a shaman has been through experiencing the dismemberment of one's body in an altered state of consciousness. Accounts of this kind of initiatory experience are relatively common among Siberian tribes and Aboriginal Australian people. Later we will examine this important type of shamanic experience and its significance (see Chapter 11).

While there are many ways to become a shaman, how is not as important as the strength of the helping spirits supporting a person. In other words, the crucial issue is not whether one pays a shaman, as among the Shuar, or almost starves and freezes to death in isolated darkness on the ice, as among some Inuit in the days before missionization. Rather, the issue can be stated very simply: does one's shamanic work produce successful results for those who ask for help? If such results come, it matters little how or where one trained, or if one trained at all in a formal sense, for the people will recognize him or her as a shaman. Shamans are known by their works, and the ultimate judgment is by those on whose behalf they work for healing, divination, and other purposes.

SHAMANS, PRIESTS, AND SHAMAN-PRIESTS

Shamans need to be distinguished from priests. Priests, whether tribal priests or those of the major civilizations, typically lead ceremonies involving extended traditional liturgies and rituals that should be performed in a specified manner, with emphasis on prayer in honor of the spirits and gods. The ideal is to perform the public ritual perfectly without the slightest deviation in detail of prayer or offering.

Such rituals can be beautiful and emotionally moving, but they are not shamanism. While shamans can and do make prayers and offerings, shamanism is very much a revelatory activity in which the shaman moves from this reality to another. There are, of course, cultures in which individuals do both priestly and shamanic work. These persons are shaman-priests. The *mara'akame* of the Huichol

Indians of northwestern Mexico are an example of such individuals. To become a *mara'akame*, one must spend years learning the priestly liturgies perfectly, as priests must do in other traditions. At the same time, the *mara'akame* learns to change consciousness and journey with the aid of the native hallucinogens, usually peyote or datura. Some *mara'akame* are more priests than shamans, and others are more shamans than priests, but they typically can act as both.

The medicine men and women of the Plains tribes of native North America likewise can be most accurately considered shaman-priests. Through the vision quest, the purification lodge, and other consciousness-changing practices and rituals, they learn to interact directly with the spirits, often in darkness. In addition, they learn detailed traditional public rites and prayers in order to honor the spirits recognized by the society. This normally takes years of training to perform correctly. Direct revelation is thus balanced simultaneously with ceremonial leadership in a ritual.

Whether a specific medicine man or woman can be defined technically as a shaman depends heavily on their direct interaction with the spirits and partly upon whether they make journeys in an altered state of consciousness. Such journeying among Plains peoples is often a very subtle thing that cannot be easily recognized by an outsider, and is done most commonly in the Middle World. In the case of any specific medicine man or woman, it might take years for an outsider to discover whether that person makes such journeys and, if they do, whether they sometimes go beyond our Middle World.

My intent in distinguishing between indigenous priests and shamans is not to make invidious comparisons, for the work done by each has its own traditional value to the community. The differences, however, ought to be kept in mind, because it would be confusing and misleading if the meaning of "shaman" were to become blurred.

SHAMANS AND MEDIUMS

There are many specialized shamanic practices. Mediumship (or "channeling") is a significant example. In mediumship a helping spirit (or "guide") comes to the medium, who, after entering an altered

state of consciousness and relinquishing control, voluntarily embodies it. Shamans do this, too, to varying degrees, depending upon the needs of the situation. Doing this in shamanism goes by various names, such as voluntary possession, merging, union, or embodiment. In indigenous shamanism, the spirit merging with the shaman is often considered to be a god, goddess, or ancestor. In contrast to my position decades ago, I now acknowledge mediumship as an important aspect of shamanic practice. However, if a medium does no other kind of shamanic work, it is hard to call it full shamanism. Nineteenth-century British mediumship comes to mind as studied and described by Alfred Russel Wallace.[17]

Full shamans can invite a helping spirit to speak through them, answering questions, but the merging is more commonly done to bring power into the shaman to heal others. Even more distinct from mediumship is the journey of shamans to visit other worlds. The spirits who help the shamans on journeys are not called "guides," because that is really a mediumistic term and can be confused in full shamanism with spirit animals, who may simply guide a person from one place to another on a shamanic journey.

If deep in an altered state of consciousness, the fully merged shaman here in the Middle World can be relatively unconscious of what the embodied spirit is communicating, or doing, through him or her. In contrast, the journeying shaman is usually quite aware of what is happening (except in a reconstructed Sami method) and attempts to remember as many details of the journey experience as possible. Thus the shaman normally can later relate to others in detail what took place in a spirit world, whereas a shaman who has consciously "stepped aside" to facilitate mediumistic communication often emerges from the altered state with limited memory, if any, of what transpired.

While the shamanic journey is seen as the most distinguishing feature of shamanism, most experienced shamans include in their practice degrees of mediumship, voluntary possession, merging, and embodiment, and they can be very important parts of their work. This is particularly true when shamans bring back a helping spirit to heal a

patient or to answer questions through the shaman.

The concept of the two realities is useful in understanding the subtle distinction between “merging” and “embodiment.” In nonordinary reality the shaman’s spirit, or soul, may merge or engage in union with another spirit in another world, without involving the body of the shaman remaining in the Middle World. Thus, it is not “embodiment.” However, if those spirits join together in the shaman’s body here in the Middle World, as in mediumistic work or certain kinds of shamanic healing, that can be called “embodiment,” although at a deeper level it still is a form of merging or union of the shaman’s own spirit or soul and another.

Depending on the indigenous culture, a person who does only mediumship may be considered a shaman, as often is the case in Korea and parts of Southeast Asia. I have changed my earlier position on this, but nonetheless they do not appear to be full shamans. In Japan, women who are mediums specialize in being possessed by the spirits of the dead in order to help them communicate with the living. I have not read reports that they heal their clients otherwise. If they do not, then they probably should not be called shamans.

The reasons for such limited or truncated shaman-like work appear lost in the mists of history. What is clear is that historical factors have greatly affected what survives as shamanism.

MATERIAL ASPECTS OF SHAMANISM

Indigenous peoples supply shamans and their families with food and other assistance in order to reciprocate their divinatory, healing, and other services. Shamans who help their people do not need to worry about their families going hungry. Because tribal reciprocity is more subtle than the impersonal cash exchanges of our market economy, some Westerners mistakenly have assumed that shamans do not get paid for their work, especially since such reciprocity is not mentioned publicly.

By way of illustration, I once took members of a Plains Indian medicine men’s society to an international healing conference in Austria. Most of these medicine men had never done their sacred

work off the reservation. At the international conference, before conducting a mass healing session, the medicine men made speeches of the type they gave on the reservation to their people. As on the reservation, they were careful to declaim, “We do not accept payment for this work.”

After these speeches were made to the Europeans, the medicine men produced a profoundly impressive traditional healing session in utter darkness. When it was over and the lights came on, the audience was obviously awed and impressed. They trooped out of the room in silent respect but without leaving a single gift, having taken the holy men at their word.

What the European audience did not understand was that, among the medicine men’s people, their speeches about not accepting payment were to make clear that their healing work was not done to acquire cash, and that their healing services were available to all, rich and poor. Nonetheless, on the reservation after such a healing session, almost everyone tried to leave some sort of gift behind. These gifts were usually symbolic offerings such as tobacco but often included envelopes containing significant amounts of money, given especially by the families of the patients.

For the medicine men, the failure of the Europeans to leave gifts so shocked them that they refused to do another healing session the rest of the month they were scheduled to stay in Europe. Instead, they mainly watched television, especially Western movies, in their hotel rooms until time to return to America.

One reason I share this story is that today in contemporary Western circles there can be a certain romantic idealism about the material side of shamanism—sometimes to such a degree that Westerners may look askance at anyone who accepts payment, other than a pouch of tobacco, for shamanic services. They should know that today among Native Americans of the Northwest Coast, it is not unusual for a person to leave a gift of a hundred dollars or more for a healing session of two hours by an outstanding shaman, with money being shared by the shaman and the assisting drummers. Similarly, among the Mono-Yokuts people of Native California in the early twentieth

century, shamans were commonly given gifts of thirty to fifty dollars per healing session, the equivalent at that time of at least one or two weeks' pay for a farm laborer.[18]

Repayment of obligations takes different forms in different societies, but it takes place nonetheless. In a few tribal societies, shamans may explicitly specify how much is to be paid in exchange for their services. Among the Shuar people of the Upper Amazon, the payment for a healing to an outstanding shaman traditionally was a pig, featherwork, a blowgun, a shotgun, or a combination of these. If the shaman had to travel to a patient in a distant neighborhood, often payment was required in advance!

What is important is that matters of material reward not be on the minds of shamans, for such preoccupations can interfere with their necessary concentration on working generously and compassionately with the spirits to help others. Similarly, to mention payments to shamans can interfere with their being helped by compassionate spirits in the healing work.

THE SPIRITUAL REWARDS OF SHAMANISM

Tribal shamans may seem to work long hours. When the sun sets, their day's ordinary chores done, they then have shamanic tasks to undertake in their community. The work at times can appear quite strenuous, involving several hours of dancing, drumming, and other physical activity, as in Siberia.

In some parts of the indigenous world, well-known shamans may also be requested to make distant "house calls," requiring them to walk, paddle, or ride horseback (or reindeer-back) significant distances to visit infirm patients, although more frequently patients and clients come to visit the shamans.

The shamans' arduous routines and the ceaseless demands of their communities have led some Western observers to wonder why anyone would want to shamanize. Indeed, it is common even for many younger relatives of a tribal shaman to express the disinclination to become a shaman, for fear that their lives would not be their own.

Nevertheless, for millennia persons have become shamans. To

explain this, some anthropologists have proposed that individuals become shamans in order to acquire social power and prestige. Such factors can, of course, sometimes be involved, along with the pursuit of wealth, as is the case with some Shuar in Ecuador. But looking at shamanism cross-culturally and from the inside, economic and social factors are not particularly important, for there are far greater nonmaterial rewards. What the outsiders miss, not having experiential knowledge of shamanism, is the great spiritual joy and ecstasy one commonly experiences working with the spirits and helping others who are suffering or in pain.

HOW SAFE IS SHAMANISM?

In my opinion, it is unsafe not to know shamanism. Virtually all humans have unconscious connections with spirits, but the vast majority of Westerners lack conscious knowledge of them and thus fail to employ them to help and protect themselves. In addition, they may use them unknowingly in nonordinary ways that may be harmful to others.

For example, New York City or any major urban area is a shaman's nightmare. There we have millions of people crowded together, often tense and under stress, commonly experiencing ungenerous feelings toward others but without any awareness or control of their power to harm others on a spiritual level. When a cartoonist draws someone "looking daggers" at someone else, it is a metaphor for the spiritual harm that people can wreak on others. Through shamanic knowledge and training, one can bring full awareness to such power so as to help, not hurt, others.

Shamans all over the world know that deep feelings of hostility toward another person can result in that other person becoming seriously ill. Knowing this, shamans (not sorcerers) can exercise consciousness and discipline to control the nonordinary, or spiritual, side of their anger, only venting the ordinary side. In this way, wise and experienced shamans carefully keep their spiritual powers under control to protect the object of their anger from psychic or spiritual damage.

Such shamanic self-control is not just altruistic. In shamanic cultures, it is well known that shamans can harm as well as heal; but it is also known that doing harm spiritually is a very serious mistake —not just because of ethics but because it is suicidal. In the folk wisdom of tribal societies around the world, it is taught that harmful shamanic acts, or sorcery, sooner or later backfire onto the perpetrator with a multiplier effect.

Conversely, the multiplier effect that punishes shamans "gone bad" rewards those who focus their abilities on alleviating human suffering. When shamans generously use their power to heal others, the compassionate spirits usually give them even more power and help them advance on this path.

SOME DIFFICULT SPIRITS OF OUR WORLD

The Middle World, our home, has a complex assortment of spirits, many of which unfortunately have limited compassion, or none at all, and can even be the source of illness and trouble. Others can be positive beings, as are many nature spirits, and helpers, most famously the power animal, a spirit type that we will discuss shortly.

Here I will offer only brief sketches of some problematical Middle World spirits, since they are not the focus of this book.

QUASI-COMPASSIONATE ETHNOCENTRIC SPIRITS

Some spirits of deceased persons have significant determination and power to remain in the Middle World to look after their surviving family members. They are typically the spirits of people who possessed considerable power during their lifetime but lost it, usually very late in life. The deceased person's power spirit usually lingers in the Middle World in haunts that had long been familiar to it. This is the kind of spirit that my Shuar companions were depending upon to protect them at that river crossing.

It is also the kind of power spirit that traditional Inuit, for example, sought for their children by giving them the name of a deceased relative that they admired for hunting and other manifestations of

power. By bestowing the name upon a child, they hoped to attract the same power to the child for his or her adult life.

These quasi-compassionate ethnocentric spirits usually provide power and protection only to their own descendants. As their intent is to protect and help their own successive generations, they are not fully compassionate in the sense that they may also undertake hostile action against outsiders who seem to threaten their descendants, their sacred places and objects, and their interests. In other words, they are both compassionate and hostile, depending upon with whom they are dealing.

An Illustration: The Shuar (Jívaro)

Until the spiritual culture of the Shuar significantly deteriorated during the last half of the twentieth century under the impact of missionization and colonization, they sought the power of an ancestor to make them resistant to illness and misfortune, and to avoid being killed in a hostile world of feuds and warfare. In short, the power was to ensure deserving descendants a long life. Young men would seek power at distant sacred waterfalls, while the women sought their power spirits within the shelter of small lean-tos in the forest close to their homes. Both genders used hallucinogens to help them perceive the spirits.[19]

As the men were the warriors, the power was considered especially important for their protection and success against enemies. There were two stages to the male Shuar's classic vision or power quest—the first one was the vision itself, the *arutam*, usually at a sacred waterfall. As I described in my book *The Jívaro*, the power seeker suffered from hunger, exhaustion, and cold prior to getting a vision at a remote waterfall. If the suffering pilgrim was successful, a typically frightening vision came for a few seconds and tested the person's bravery and seriousness of purpose. The second part of this quest usually occurred the next night during the questing person's descent from the waterfall. At that time, the person slept beside the rapid of a river and hoped for a dream, which was the real transmission of the

power.

If the dream came, it mostly was in the form of an appearance by a Shuar warrior, in traditional tribal dress, who spoke to the dreamer more or less in this fashion: “I am your ancestor. Just as I have killed many times, so will you. Just as I have lived a long time, so will you.” Immediately a feeling of power permeated the body of the dreamer, who usually then awoke, feeling an urge to kill.

These local ancestral spirits were expected by the Shuar not only to give them strength and well-being, but also to give them power in killing their families’ enemies. These ethnocentric spirits were those of persons who before or after dying resolved to continue to protect their descendants. They retained the Middle World prejudices they nourished when alive, so their compassion was mixed with hostility and even vengeance.

However, as I learned living with the Shuar, an outsider does not necessarily have to be a descendant to come under the protection of an ethnocentric power if the outsider has been helping its descendants. This may help explain my success at the waterfall and, years later, at the cave. Even so, the spirit’s protective power can be subsequently taken away from strangers, and even descendants, who behave in ways that do not honor the ancestor. Not only may these ethnocentric spirits take away the protective power, they may even exact vengeance on outsiders who have failed to protect sacred objects and places where the ancestral spirits reside.

The Example of the Nganasan Idol

A possible example of the vengeful side of a quasi-compassionate ethnocentric power is the main spiritual protector of the Nganasan people of western Siberia. This spirit is considered to be merged with an impressive carved anthropomorphic wooden figure (see Plate 5). The Nganasan have traditionally treated the figure with extreme reverence, leaving it in the care of a shaman with the responsibility of keeping the spirit content by communicating with it and making offerings.

As with other ethnocentric spirits, its compassion does not usually extend to outsiders, and especially not to tribes that have been enemies of the Nganasan. When going into battle against other tribes, the Nganasan carried this wooden image on a special sled, which seems somewhat analogous to the sacred ark that the ancient Hebrews carried into battle.

This wooden carving was of unknown age among the Nganasan, but certainly very old. It had a difficult history during the last couple of centuries, having been stolen from the Nganasan at least once and later recovered. In the mid-twentieth century it was in the care of the most famous Nganasan shaman, but, being old, he was worried about what would happen to it after he died. So he passed it on to a friend, the Russian ethnologist Yuri Simchenko, for safekeeping at his apartment in Moscow in order that it would not fall into the wrong hands.

In the 1980s, during a period of social and economic upheaval in the then Soviet Union, food became scarce in Moscow, and Yuri Simchenko soon was desperate for funds to feed his family. He contacted a visiting Finnish ethnologist to see if the Nganasan figure could be sold in the West to get some money for food. Heimo Lappalainen agreed to help and smuggled the carving out of Russia. Heimo, a friend and colleague, then contacted me, explaining how he needed to sell it at Yuri's request, and told me Simchenko's price.

Heimo and I agreed that we did not want to let the object be lost by selling it on the open market. So money was found to buy the carving from Yuri for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. On behalf of the Foundation, I kept it in our home, covered and stored in a safe place. My intention was to return the power object to the Nganasan people when the political and economic situations in the former Soviet Union settled down and made it safe to do so. I treated it with respect and care, offering the image tastes of foods that I presumed the Nganasan people ate, and making assurances that I would get it home. I had long since concluded that spirits were real.

Then I noted that a curious series of fatalities occurred as the "idol" was taken farther and farther away from its own people. First the

Nganasan shaman, Seime, died soon after turning over the figure to Yuri Simchenko. Then when Simchenko transferred the figure to Heimo Lappalainen to take to Finland, Simchenko died, and then when Heimo left the figure with me in America and returned to Finland, he died as well. Needless to say, this chain of events had a healthy effect on my conscientiousness, and I mentally elevated the spirit to deity-status just to be on the safe side. Over the subsequent years I kept giving it traditional offerings.

Finally, a few years ago, after many difficulties and false starts in Russia, the Foundation was able to return the object successfully to the Nganasan people through a meeting and ceremonial exchange at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. There Dr. Bill Brunton of the Foundation turned it over to a representative of the Nganasan people who, with her companions, was to take the idol back to Siberia. Bill noted that she was observably nervous and trembling as she accepted the power object, spoke to it, and gave it offerings. She and her entourage later reported, apparently with some relief, that their trip home to Siberia had gone amazingly well. For my part, I'm happy to relate that by all accounts, Bill Brunton and I both are still alive.

THE AMORAL SPIRITS AND SORCERY

Among important spirits of the Middle World are the amoral powers, who lack even the narrow compassion of the ethnocentric spirits. Use of these powers to affect the lives of others without their permission is a symptom of sorcery.

These amoral spirits, whose effective realm is the Middle World, include the spirits of elements and the spirits of certain small objects and creatures, such as the *tsentsak* of the Shuar, which are "bribed" with tobacco to do whatever their "master" wishes, whether a shaman or a sorcerer.

A form of sorcery once common in Europe involves the use of the spirits of the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water, all of which are amoral. Wood, an Asian-named fifth element, can also play a (usually less recognized) role.

A present-day European survival of such sorcery was described to me by an Irish woman whose grandmother taught her how to "source" the elements to provide her with their power by rubbing dirt from the garden (earth) or charcoal (fire) from the fireplace on the forehead.[20] (One could speculate that this "sourcery" may be the origin of the English word "sorcery," despite the slight variation in spelling.)

Being amoral, the spirits of the elements lack compassion and simply provide power to reinforce whatever a sorcerer is attempting to do, whether for good or bad. Using these Middle World spirits, a sorcerer is tempted to affect and even damage other people's lives,[21] quite in contrast to the ethics of core shamanism, which emphasize the help of the transcended compassionate spirits dwelling in the Upper or Lower Worlds. If a shaman were for some reason to "go bad" and attempt to cause pain and suffering to another person or being, such compassionate spirits typically take back the powers they had lent to the shaman. Once this happens, the now powerless person is no longer able to heal others and, without the protection of that power, may become seriously ill or die if in a society where sorcery is prevalent.

A Classic Case of Sorcery: The Shuar Again

The Shuar (Jívaro) provide a good example of troubles that can occur when shamans are limited to the Middle World, as I first learned among them more than half a century ago. Working with Middle World spirits is both complicated and dangerous, and this was the world of the Shuar shamans. They did not ascend to the Upper World and went only a very short distance toward the Lower World—that is, only into the lakes and the rivers. A society that is thus limited to Middle World spirits tends to be strong on bewitching (sorcery). I shall use the past tense in writing about their practices, although I learn from visiting Shuar that much of what I describe still continues covertly. Overt bloodshed, however, is said to have declined due to the intervention of the Ecuadorian police.

Among the Shuar during my time in the field, this situation was aggravated by a strong spiritual dependence on an amoral spirit, the element water, which was implicitly emphasized as an underlying source of power. Rather than being sourced directly, as in the Irish case cited earlier, it was the common denominator of some of the most powerful spirits, including the local ancestors dwelling at the sacred waterfalls; the first and eternal shaman, Tsunki, dwelling underwater; and the boa constrictor in the lagoons. Shamans worked with such spirits to indirectly source the power of water.

Shuar shamans worked with other amoral spirits besides those of the elements. Both the good and bad shamans typically had small helping spirits, such as those of insects, snakes, and thorns that, depending on the type, were usually called *tsentsak* or *tunchi*. The "good" or healing shamans used them for curing patients, while the "bad" shamans employed them for bewitching.

Both these types were quite amoral and ready to be "bribed" by the shamans to help them. The *tsentsak* and *tunchi* spirits love tobacco, so shamans attracted and retained their services by ingesting an infusion of green-tobacco-leaf water day and night to feed and keep them merged with the shaman's body.

Almost all Shuar shamans kept the spirits of these small helpers merged with their bodies not only to assist them in healing patients, but also to protect themselves from attacks by *wawek* or *yahauchï uwishin* (shamans "gone bad" who became sorcerers). For example, the *tsentsak* could gather together as shields to protect their "masters" when incoming *tsentsak* and *tunchi* "missiles" were sent by sorcerers to kill or seriously injure them.

The Shuar were formerly involved in long and bloody feuds. In the course of those armed conflicts, shamans would understandably get angry at the murderer of a family member or close relative. Some, unable to control their anger, would then use their power to retaliate shamanically against the perpetrator.

This was considered a big mistake, and shamans who did this were known, even to their close relatives, as having become "bad" shamans or *wawek*, in recognition of the fact that they had not only deviated

from the shamanic ideal of helping to alleviate suffering and pain, but were also working in the opposite way.

If they engaged in spiritually hostile acts against a relative, they could anger a common ethnocentric ancestral spirit attempting to guard its descendants. Consequently, the spirit could be expected to remove its power from such a shaman, with only the "perfume" of the power remaining and then continually dwindling.

When the power had completely vanished, such persons were shamans no more. They now became victims of their own acts, for they had lost their protective power. Reportedly in a year and a half or less, they were expected to meet calamitous and painful deaths, such as by sorcerers and other enemies.[22] Beyond the Shuar, and in general, such sorcery has a karmic-like effect that eventually hurts or kills the sorcerer.

THE SUFFERING BEINGS

Also in the Middle World are the spirits of deceased persons who are involuntarily here, unlike quasi-compassionate ethnocentric spirits that have chosen to remain. They normally do not have much power but still can be a widespread source of illness.

These spirits most commonly do not know that they are dead, and they are aware that they are lonely and usually unhappy. For this reason, they are often called "suffering beings," or sometimes "wandering" or "lost" souls. In their unhappiness, they may seek to enter a living person's body/mind or simply be hovering close to that person. In doing so, they typically reinforce the illusion that they are still alive, as they have merged with or attached to the living person. They not only can influence dreams, but the "memories of those deceased beings may become confused with the dreams of the living person, with the result that living persons may assume erroneously that they are having their own past-life experiences."[23]

The person who is subjected to such an influence will not only be affected in dreams. In more extreme cases, he or she can become confused to the point of being unable to continue to function adequately as a member of society. Thus, troubles of a spirit nature

can have serious repercussions in a person's health and community life. It is the task of the shaman, when requested, to heal such persons with spiritual help.

5

The Journey to Other Worlds

Given ethnocentric spirits, as well as other spirit problems and conflicts of our Middle World, it is not surprising that some shamans leave for other worlds where they can find and enlist the help of unconditionally compassionate spirits, hereafter simply referred to as the "compassionate spirits," who provide divine knowledge, wisdom, healing knowledge, and power to help shamans and their patients. This is the approach of many of the "sky shamans" in Siberian Tuva and other shamans elsewhere on the planet who specialize in getting help from the compassionate spirits or beings beyond our world. It is also a significant reason for the use of the journey in core shamanism, based upon experience and experimentation by many thousands of Westerners over approximately four decades.

The shaman's journey (sometimes called the "magical flight" or "soul journey") to the worlds above and below us in another reality is a distinctive aspect of shamanism compared to other spiritual traditions.[1] The main purpose of these journeys is to obtain extraordinary knowledge and help from the other worlds for others or for oneself.

Consequently, the shamanic journey is often a centerpiece of shamanism, engaging fully compassionate spirits of other worlds to effect "impossible" (i.e., miraculous) results in healing and divination. In this work, the shaman is not merely a supplicant so much as someone actively engaged with a helping spirit to alleviate the

suffering and illness of another. Through this temporary but intimate alliance, shamans in indigenous cultures are typically expected by their peoples to produce healing and helping results beyond those available from prayer alone.

THE SHAMAN'S THREE WORLDS

The journeys of the shamans involve three worlds: the one below us, popularly called the underworld; the one above us, often called the heavens; and the one in between, where we live, the Middle World. I first became aware of the importance of distinguishing them while living and learning shamanism with the Conibo people of the Ucayali River region of eastern Peru in 1960–61.

Several years later (1964), in reading Mircea Eliade's book, newly published in English, I realized the widespread cross-cultural existence of the concept, which he sometimes referred to as the "three cosmic zones," stacked one above the other along the Axis Mundi, or World Tree.[2] Instead of three cosmic "zones," I have long preferred the term "the three worlds," for indeed there is a whole world to be discovered above us in nonordinary reality, and another below us, with multiple levels or zones within each. Thus, we usefully speak of the Upper, Middle (ours), and Lower Worlds. (See Plates 6 and 7.)

In addition, there exist what I call "Interworlds," narrow bands of particular spirits at the interfaces of the Middle World with the Upper and Lower ones. I discovered these in the late 1970s while doing soul-retrieval work. An Interworld resembles what is commonly called "limbo." More about that later. The preceding remarks do not exclude the possibility of other worlds horizontally at the extremities of the Middle World, or that both the Upper and Lower ones may unite around us as a kind of cosmic sphere. A great and exciting exploration of nonordinary reality continues to beckon.

LEVELS

Cross-cultural reports on the number of levels in each world vary considerably, and counts can be affected by individual experiences

and by cultural constraints related to counting. In many nonliterate populations, people rarely needed to count beyond their fingers, perhaps partly because the needs of civilization for counting with regard to tribute, taxation, and commerce had not yet become part of their lives. In such groups, as in the Peruvian Amazon, shamans seem to have enumerated only a few levels in the Upper and Lower Worlds. In contrast, shamans living close to major civilizations where counting was well developed (such as in China) reported the greatest number of levels. In Inner Asian and Siberian societies, shamans counted up to forty-nine levels or "skies" in the Upper World.

"Official" statements about the number of levels or about characteristics are not part of core shamanic methodology. Instead individual shamanic journeyers draw working conclusions as they progress in their firsthand investigations. As people practice shamanic journeying, they gradually become acquainted with the sequences of levels in the Upper and Lower Worlds, what is to be found on them, and under what circumstances.

TRANSITION ZONES OR "BARRIERS"

Like core shamanism in general, the following information was arrived at inductively through cross-cultural study, experimentation, and practice. Three main barriers have been noticed involving the two realities in shamanic work. The barriers are also sometimes called "transition zones." People, when trained, normally can cross all of them relatively easily with the help of auditory driving. Spirits, however, usually are not able to cross them without some shamanic help. A notable exception is the power animal, which commonly seems to be able to transcend all barriers with ease.

The first is the important barrier between ordinary and nonordinary reality, which is transcended by shifting from the OSC to the SSC, as noted earlier. For about 90 percent of Westerners, this can be easily facilitated by means of adequately loud and repetitious drumming in the range of about 220 beats per minute, coupled with a basic knowledge of shamanism and a serious intention to enter the other reality for some planned purpose.

Once in NOR, the shaman may work primarily here in the Middle World, going in and out of NOR as is common in certain types of healing, and calling in help from another world, or going to it. That latter choice brings us to the second type of barrier, the one between this, the Middle World, and the others.

Stereotypical and mundane as it may sound, the barrier to the Upper World is commonly a cloud layer or a membrane of some type, sometimes with a hole in it. It is usually transcended easily, although doing this may take practice.

The third type of barrier is within the Upper World and often presents itself as another cloud layer or membrane. Typically, this third type of barrier is transcended with the least difficulty. There is no fixed number of these; each person has to discover this individually. Also at times the levels may expand or collapse together, like an accordion.

The situation for the Lower World is analogous. The first barrier separates the Middle World from the Lower and is usually earth or water with passage made by means of a tunnel. The subsequent barriers are typically more easily transcended, usually by using tunnels. As with the Upper World, each person has to discover the number of these.

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

Shamans' maps are in their minds. Therefore it is essential for them to know where they start from, just as a surveyor must use a benchmark as a reference point from which all mapping is done. As shamans make more journeys from the same departure locations, they are able to add more and more details to their mental maps.

The departure places are ones that shamans know firsthand in ordinary reality. Usually each shaman has one specific departure site from which he or she repeatedly starts for the Upper World and another one from which to start for the Lower World. These departure points become fixed in a shaman's mind, to be visualized and utilized over and over again in order to travel with the greatest accuracy into the vast cosmos of nonordinary reality.

Whatever departure point a shaman uses, it becomes for each the Center of the Universe, since all subsequent mental mapping proceeds from the points used. If a shaman uses one place to depart for the Upper World and another for the Lower World, each is the Center of Universe in terms of mapping the journeys made from that point. Since the shamans know the distance and direction in the Middle World of these two departure sites, they can easily map their Upper and Lower World discoveries in relation to them. Sometimes shamans have a single special departure place for going both up and down. In such a case, the coordinated mapping of the Upper and Lower Worlds is even easier.

In these journeys, one can travel "outside of time" through a normally imperceptible universe otherwise known mainly through dream and myth. "Outside of time" is the fortuitous phrase coined by distinguished Russian ethnographer Waldemar Bogoras to describe the journeys of the Siberian tribal shamans about whom he published in the early twentieth century.[3] While there is no evidence that Bogoras undertook shamanic training and practice himself, he did seem to understand and respect the profound cosmic nature of the shamans' experiences during their journeys.[4]

The late Siberian shaman Tubiyaku, of the Nganasan people, asked my Russian ethnologist friend, the now-deceased Yuri Simchenko, to get him a computer, of whose abilities he had heard. As Tubiyaku's memory was declining, he needed help to remember what discoveries he had made where in his shamanic journeys. Without electricity and a knowledge of computers, saving his memories in this way was not possible.

Now Tubiyaku has long since passed on, and his knowledge with him. However, today we do commonly have electricity and computers, so it is possible to record and map one's own discoveries. And that brings us to the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory.

THE SHAMANIC KNOWLEDGE CONSERVATORY

In the 1960s I began amassing a large library of publications

connected with shamanism. Then, in the 1970s, I also began collecting the accounts of Western students who made shamanic journeys or who had other kinds of shamanic experiences. Today these form part of the Foundation's Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory, which also includes a vast collection of publications connected with indigenous shamanism, as well as shamanic artifacts.

The purpose of collecting the Western reports was to see "if there was anything out there." Like a good old-fashioned ethnographer, I accepted the stories of the "natives" (in this case, Westerners) without judgment and recognized my responsibility to preserve them for future generations to study and to compare to non-Western accounts of the Upper and Lower Worlds. Also I was frankly curious to see what they found, and I wanted at some point to personally compare them to firsthand indigenous accounts unaffected by Westernization, which so far has been a vain hope.[5]

Eventually, with the support and help of many persons, including donors, Foundation members, former students, and a few dedicated staff members,[6] we expanded and formalized the procedure by setting up the Mapping of Nonordinary Reality project (MONOR) as part of the work of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. (The "mapping" term is meant primarily to cover written descriptions but also includes diagrammatic maps. See Plates 8 and 9.)

Today the Foundation carefully preserves these irreplaceable reports in the Western Archives of its Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory in Marin County, California, as well as at secure locations elsewhere in North America and Europe. The Western Archives are unique in the world because of their content and size. As of the last count, made June 25, 2007, the archives included 2,528 accounts of shamanic ascension to the Upper World by Westerners, with more added since. As of April 15, 2008, the archives had accumulated records of 2,397 descents to the Lower World.

In recent years, I decided to make a "Celestia Study" of the Upper World documents. The ascension experiences in the following pages were selected from that study as representative examples. Because of limitations of time and resources, it has not yet been possible to

undertake an equivalent “Netheria Study” of Lower World experiences.

Each person’s description of a shamanic journey is a cosmographic fact, just as in classic anthropological fieldwork each informant’s statement is an ethnographic fact, recorded as such in the fieldworker’s notebook. In the pages that follow, I sometimes group statements of the various Westerners into broad categories with little individual analysis on my part. Generally I try to resist the temptation to go farther. There are good reasons for this. First, the journeys are so individually rich with multiple experiences that their grouping according to a single experience does not do them justice. Secondly, I wish to encourage readers to make such observations themselves and to feel free to exercise their spiritual independence.

The approach of the following pages tries to reflect this view. One caveat: sometimes I do offer suggestions or speculations. These are not offered as dogma but as personal ideas intended to stimulate the thinking of others. Ultimately, interpreting the meaning of an Upper World experience is the province of the experiencer.

It is virtually impossible to know the total significance of what happened to another person in nonordinary reality. Even that person may not realize much of an experience’s significance without doing additional ascensions for more information. Unfortunately, it was not possible to undertake follow-up interviews with the Westerners and include hindsight commentaries in this book.[7]

The accounts are typically presented as originally given. For the requirements of this book, they are sometimes edited for conciseness, but virtually all the originals are preserved in the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory. One last note: the terms “Westerners” and “students” are interchangeable in the following pages since they refer to the same population, virtually all being persons who at some point participated as students in the North American core shamanism programs of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.

6

The Westerners' First Journeys: The Lower World and Power Animals

> My second helping spirit was a shark. One day when I was out in my kayak, it came swimming up to me, lay alongside quite silently and whispered my name. I was greatly astonished, for I had never seen a shark before; they are very rare in these waters. Afterwards it helped me with my hunting, and was always near me when I had need of it.
> —*Aua, an Iglulik Eskimo shaman*[1]

In *The Way of the Shaman*, I wrote about how power animal retrieval was done for another person and mentioned how soul retrieval was done in a similar way.[2] That exercise was aimed to reconnect other persons to any power animals they had, or still had, not to obtain a *new* power animal—typically a more demanding process, as illustrated by my cave experience (see Chapter 1).

Now I wish to describe an introductory or practice journey given to Westerners to help them develop a close relationship with at least one power animal as a helper through doing divination work with its assistance. The examples in this chapter of how this was done were primarily drawn from the Foundation's Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory. The Lower World was chosen for this subject mainly because plant and animal life, including power animals, seem more easily encountered there than in the Upper World, although they are found in both. If the relationship is good, power animals can easily join the journeyer in traversing all three worlds.

An animal that regularly can be depended on to answer questions or otherwise help a person is, by definition, a helping animal of that individual. If, as in the journeys below, one is given the help of an answer by an animal, or help through a ride by an animal, then the journeyer knows, simply put, that it is a helping animal! By the way, there is no "official" restriction on how many there may be for one person. Such helping animals in nonordinary reality are commonly known as "power animals," following the general introduction of the term in 1980.[3]

THE HELP AND WISDOM OF POWER ANIMALS

In shamanic cultures all over the world, one finds the shamans conscious of special nonordinary animal companions or helpers, commonly referred to in the anthropological literature as "guardian spirits."[4] Other names for these animal helpers in the literature include: tutelary spirits, assistant totems, guardian angels, and familiars.

Such guardians are not unique to shamans, for in their cultures it is assumed that almost everyone needs spiritual help, whether from guardian spirits or other powers, to reach adulthood. Shamans, however, are different from most other people in that they know who their guardian spirits are, simply because they repeatedly interact with them firsthand in nonordinary reality.

Among Native Americans of the Northwest Coast of North America, the guardian spirit is commonly called a "power animal."[5] I personally prefer to use this term because it reminds us of the powerful forces that the animal brings to the person with whom it is connected. The power animal, or guardian spirit, might be compared to an electric transformer or adapter that receives the immense power of the universe and modulates it into a form that can be safely transmitted to a human. The immensity of the power is one of the reasons shamans work with intermediary "powers," such as power animals, rather than calling upon the total universe itself.

This power is something like energy, and native peoples sometimes

translate it as “energy” when speaking to Westerners. The concept of power, however, is more than just “energy” as we usually know it, which I discussed earlier in Chapter 1. This power also has knowledge and can pass qualities on to the individual human. So this power is not exactly the same as the “energy” defined in college physics classes.

The guardian angels of Christianity, being guardian spirits, resemble power animals in some of their roles and functions if not in their understood appearance. This similarity is often recognized by native peoples. For example, several years ago I was working with an elderly native Hawaiian lady who is a healer and a proud repository of her people’s knowledge. Missionaries, however, have been operating in Hawaii for approximately a century and three-quarters and, as a result, Christian and Hawaiian spiritual concepts have become interwoven in native Hawaiian cosmology. Thus, she used the English term “guardian angels” for power animals or guardian spirits. One of the Hawaiian “guardian angels,” by the way, is Shark, something I am not sure that the missionaries would have comprehended, although the Iglulik Eskimo shaman quoted at the beginning of this chapter would have understood completely.

Power animals are not by any means the sole power connection that shamans have with the universe. There is almost an infinite variety of plant helpers, spirits of elements, of places, of heavenly bodies, of ancestors, and so on, with whom shamans work. The power animals, however, seem to be almost ubiquitous in shamanic practice. Perhaps this is partially because we have a close connection to the other animals, and perhaps because the power animals, as animals, are highly mobile and will come whenever the shamans call for assistance.

The importance of the power animal goes far beyond calling it for assistance. Power animals connect one to the incredible power of the universe and modulate it in a form that does not overwhelm the individual human. Shamans and others who have such spiritual guardians become themselves power-filled, or power-full, and stay that way as long as they remain connected to these spiritual

representatives of the universe.

Power animals tend to be compassionate spirits who particularly help those who act in a like vein, such as by healing others. If someone they help stops acting compassionately, they do not seem to punish that person but simply withdraw their help. Unless new power sources are acquired, that person's power will gradually dwindle until they lose protection from illness and misfortune.

This power connection is viewed in shamanic cultures as making people resistant to disease and misfortune, something like a force field that both surrounds and pervades the person. With that power, not only is the person protected, but life goes more smoothly, as though riding the current of a river.

Power animals tend to come and go, just as other spiritual connections may be temporary. An important part of shamanism, therefore, is to maintain one's spiritual power connections for health and success in life. Indeed, if shamans or other persons find themselves seriously ill or experiencing other misfortune, it usually means that their power animals and other helping spirits have left them.[6]

When people lose such spiritual connections, as the Indian peoples in the Amazon explained to me many years ago, then they are in danger. There is a lag, however, for as the Shuar poetically pointed out, "the power is like perfume."[7] That is, the power will linger for a time after the actual connection is gone. So for a brief period one is still protected by the lingering, but dwindling, power.

Shamans, unlike most other people, do not have to wait until things go wrong in their lives to realize that they have lost their spiritual power connections. Through the journey method they can discover, well before the symptoms of power loss or powerlessness occur, whether they are still connected to their power animals. The method is simple: when they repeatedly journey and call upon their power animals for help, and no power animal appears, then the shamans realize their power animals have left them. Knowing this before misfortune occurs makes it possible for shamans to take action to get the power connection restored. An important method for doing this is

called “power animal retrieval,” described by me elsewhere.[8]

The power of these nonordinary animal helpers includes the ability to answer our questions. One might wonder, however, how people know if they can trust the answers the power animals give. In reply, the standards are the same as those that people apply in ordinary reality to learn whether they can trust a specific doctor, lawyer, or other acquaintance, and the trust is determined by their track records. If people consistently provide you with reliable advice and help, you learn to trust them. In other words, in both ordinary and nonordinary reality, we are working with knowledge based upon firsthand experience.

Here is a comment by a student: “For me the experience that animals possess the power of knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence was new. I found that I could accept that they had something to teach me which I had not yet touched on in other spiritual disciplines.”

In shamanism, individuals should conduct their own personal experiments in nonordinary reality and arrive at their own conclusions regarding the reliability of experiences and the answers received.

DEPARTING FOR THE LOWER WORLD

Most adults have, or have had, compassionate spirit support in their lives, but in Western culture they generally seem not aware of it, nor of its common manifestation as an animal. The Westerners whose accounts were used in the Celestia Study generally had already discovered the identity of their preexisting personal power animals in the Lower World, and they had usually read about them in *The Way of the Shaman*.

In that book[9] I described common locations used by indigenous shamans to depart for the Lower World, so I will just touch lightly on the subject now. The departure places mentioned here are among those known to indigenous shamans and used successfully by contemporary Westerners. Additional sites are noted in Appendix B.

Suggested departure points include a hole in a specific location, a

cave, a spring or well, a lake, a bay of an ocean, a tree with a hole in it (for entering the tree and going down), a whirlpool, and a waterfall's pool (or an entrance behind the waterfall).

Whatever the entrance is, it must be firmly located in the Middle World and known firsthand in ordinary reality to the journeyer. Many places look alike in nonordinary reality, but this does not mean they are the same place. Accordingly, it is important that journeyers not simply close their eyes and visualize any cave or other type of departure place without knowing that it is located in the Middle World and where that site is. Otherwise journeys to the Lower World cannot be reliably mapped from it.

A HOLE IN A SPECIFIC LOCATION

A hole in the earth is a common departure place for going to the Lower World. If one knows a cellar doorway but has never gone through it down the steps, that too has the potential of being used as a departure point, because it provides a transition from the known to the unknown. Carl Jung's famous journey down through a cellar was a spontaneous parallel of the shaman's method of departing for the Lower World.[10] However, for most Westerners, a cave or opening into the earth usually is more successful.

A LAKE OR BAY

Among the Native American peoples of Northern California, the shamans would sometimes descend through remote mountain lakes they had visited and by which they had slept.[11]

JOURNEYS TO MEET AN ANIMAL

Although both human and animal spirits can be found in the Lower World, the animals tend to be more common.[12] To encourage the success of Westerners new to journeying, they are often asked to make their first journey simply to meet an animal, any animal, without any further mission. Here is an example.

Upon exiting the dark cavern, I confronted an immense landscape bathed with bright, almost blinding, light. I found myself standing before a golden plain scattered with sagebrush. I walked down a slope toward an open corral occupied by several white horses. As I approached them, there was one that seemed to command my attention. We looked at each other eye to eye and soon became locked in an intense, almost hypnotic connection.

Eventually we began a very vigorous and rhythmic dance together. The white horse would toss its mane about wildly, lifting her front legs in the air, then pounding them into the earth. Sometimes she would raise her front legs so high that she seemed to grow in size, towering above me. It was during these moments when her face would appear to be more like a woman's, though magical in appearance. Her mane would become a tousle of white hair; the elongated horse face would turn into the attractive face of a young, beautiful woman.

We danced for an immeasurable duration. Feeling exhausted, I wanted to stop and, instead, to climb onto her back for a ride. At first she seemed reluctant to allow me such a request. But after I persisted, she finally calmed down and approached me with gentler movements. But before I could climb onto her back, I heard the drumming signal to return to the Middle World. My ride would have to happen some other time.[13]

The above journey illustrates the frequently experienced mythical nature of shamanic journeys. In this case, the horse's face becomes that of "a young, beautiful woman." The ability of an animal to reveal its human side is well known to shamans in tribal cultures, and it is part of the reason the term "animal people" is used and why animals and humans are often mythically united as one. This account also illustrates the reality of the experience for the journeyer, for she became exhausted dancing with the womanhorse. Thus, this journey illustrates both the "mythic realm" and the "reality" that shamans encounter via journeys.

In the next example of a beginner's journey simply to meet an animal, the person was hoping to meet an eagle. Instead, she encountered a wolf, which she reported "completely surprised me." Such encounters with the unexpected are typical of shamanic journeying, and they are part of the reason experienced shamanic journeyers no longer worry about whether they are "making up" what is happening in the shamanic state of consciousness. They have come to understand that normal psychological models do not easily explain many of the mysteries of shamanism.

Here is her account, narrated as the journey was happening, using simultaneous narration (for information on this technique, see this page). Her departure place for the Lower World was a pond located in a mountainous region in upstate New York.

I've turned the tape on, it's beginning to play the drum sound. I'm lying on the floor trying to get relaxed … not much going on yet … I'm peering into the frog pond … just looking into it before I decide to get into this pond … little unhatched frogs … I've got my feet in … it's kinda scary. I've let my whole body in … the first sensation is I'm up to my neck in cool water … I just decide to dive in.

There's a space in the rocks down below. I find a way to get my body around the rocks and there's water over me … my body feels real relaxed, real loose. I feel like I'm being sucked down into a passage. It's very bright, though. It seems like there's a lot of light, although I'm underwater and can breathe easily. It's almost as though the drum is like the water, beating.

I'm moving that fast … I can hear the sound of wolves, but don't see anything yet, like they're far away.

I see a big black hairy animal. He's very black. My body's very hot right now. It's like I'm moving through the tunnel, but I see this black fuzzy dog—no, it's a wolf. He's got his head up … my body feels very hot. He's got his head up, like he's singing to the moon.

I'm in a place that's very dark, it's nighttime. It's an open area. It's

weird ’cause I don’t remember coming out of the tunnel. The tunnel just opened out onto this space where there’s a lot of snow. There are a lot of stars. It’s huge, vast, open, there’s nothing on the horizon. It’s very bright because of the stars and there’s this black wolf … he has very yellow eyes and he’s looking at me now. I’m looking at him, he’s looking at me, and we’re not moving. I feel something very deep in my belly, like fear. His tongue is hanging out of his mouth and he’s just looking at me. The stars are very bright. It’s like we’re hypnotizing each other. I can’t really move. I feel adrenaline pumping in my body like I’m afraid, and I know I should be afraid. His eyes just say “I belong here.” (Me or the wolf? I’m not sure.)

He points with his snout for me to look at the stars. I’m supposed to look at a particular constellation … I think it’s the Pleiades. I saw these stars in Peru last summer. The drums seem to be company. It feels lonely here, but this wolf is with me.

I feel like I’m him. I feel like I have become the wolf looking at these stars. I feel like there’s this expansive openness and I start running. I feel the wind in my ears … very fast … I’m moving very fast, my legs pumping. It’s almost as though the snow is very hard, it just slides, glides beneath me, it doesn’t give. Moving very, very fast … very, very fast. It’s almost as though moving so fast we (I) could fly….

Now I’m riding the wolf, the wolf is taking me and we can fly.

We’re flying, my body is shivering, I feel so cold. I’m freezing, very, very cold. I’m riding his back. My body’s shivering and it feels like he’s taking me up to one star. It’s getting bright, very, very bright. Big sister … I don’t know where that …

Big sister star, brother wolf, sister star. We’re on a knoll now on another plane. It’s still nighttime, we’re still in the open. Now I see a white wolf … very black around its mouth, a pink tongue. I think it’s a shewolf. She’s beautiful. She wants to run with us … We’re running together, I’m still on the hewolf’s back. We’re now on the round again and we’re going closer … closer and closer to … to a crest, and over the crest. We leap across a large iceflow. They’re together, they’re playing, we’re all playing in the snow. It’s beautiful. The stars are magnificent. Moving very fast. The drums seem to be slowing down,

the drums are there. I don't understand it: the drums seem to be going very very slow. We're moving much, much faster.

Phew! A shooting star, like a comet, it just dropped in the sky. Just dropped onto the horizon. It's very bright. So we go over to it. It's very bright. It's a crystal! A crystal has dropped in the snow.

It's a pure, clear stone. There is a face in the stone. I'm left looking at the stone. There's a … a brown face, it has two almond-shaped eyes … he's looking …

Oh, I just got it! It's like I'm looking up through ice. I've been traveling under ice and I have to find the opening, the hole. And there's this face looking down at me and it begins to chip away. And it makes an opening for me. It's a fisherperson, a person who's fishing. I climb out of the hole. So I'm the one who's been trapped underneath. Think I must have been in the tunnel all this time, but it felt like a wide-open space.

It's brilliant daylight. It's like the tundra and there's a sled and a person, like an Eskimo, who's been fishing there. He looks at me, or she looks at me, and we just look at each other. Very dark brown eyes. And he's talking to me, but I don't understand what he's saying to me. I don't know who this is … I'm trying to tell him about my friend the wolf, and he nods his head, like he knows what I'm talking about … he's laughing, he's laughing.

He takes me over and I eat some fish. It's delicious. But I have to leave now. [She hears the call-back signal.] I thank him … so I go back to the hole in the ice and jump in and come back. It's very dark now, very dark, and I'm coming back. It feels like a long way, like I've dropped through the middle of the earth and … I wind upward … I'm coming through the rocks now. The rocks are slippery and brown and gold. And I'm slipping up through them. I see the frog eggs. The frog eggs are still there. The tadpoles are moving around … and I come up out of the water and sit on the edge of the bank of the stream.[14]

These were the journeyer's comments immediately afterward:

I feel like I've connected with … some old ancestors somewhere.

> The wolf was beautiful. His eyes. And the fish was delicious, raw fish. I could taste it. I felt like it happened so fast. My body felt very cold, and it felt fear, and it felt hot, too. It felt a lot of extremes of temperature.
>
> The things that were especially clear were: the wolf, the eyes, the crystal, the face inside the crystal, then me looking up through ice and … me getting up through it, seeing it's very bright. It was as though I'd been underneath the ice all that time, but I'd seen a universe … of stars. It was strange because I seemed to pass from the frogs to the wolf very quickly. It was as though I went around the bend of some rocks and there I was! I saw the wolf almost immediately and the stars were there, they were there, it was as though it just opened up and I was out there immediately. The most vivid thing was the yellow eyes of the wolf and the black eyes of the face, the Eskimo face. My body's shaking. I have chills all over me.

Among the noteworthy features of her journey was the fact that she was not just seeing but feeling (heat and cold as well as slippery rocks), hearing (the sound of wolves), and tasting (fish). She also found herself able to breathe underwater.

Then she became one with the wolf, a classic shamanic experience characteristic of interaction with one's guardian spirit or power animal. Further evidence that this animal was a helping animal for her was that it gave her a ride.

Her spontaneous merging with the wolf exemplifies how even a beginning, naïve, "civilized" journeyer unexpectedly and readily enters the mythic reality known since ancient times to the tribal shaman. As Eliade observes, "Each time a shaman succeeds in sharing the animal mode of being, he in a manner reestablishes the situation that existed *in illo tempore*, in mythical times, when the divorce between man and animal had not yet occurred."[15] Evidence of her changed state of consciousness is her observation, "The drums seem to be slowing down.…" In ordinary reality, the drumming on the tape was constant and did not slow down at all.

She discovers, as have many shamans the world over, that the quartz crystal can help one see shamanically. She also spontaneously learns something of the hidden cosmology of nonordinary reality, such as the observation that there are stars in the Lower World, and that she can come back up into the Middle World through an opening somewhere else (in this case, an ice hole made by an Eskimo or Inuit), and then return down through it to get back to her original entrance into the Lower World. These things, too, are well known to tribal shamans. Specifically, this last technique—of going down through a pond or waterhole in order to travel though the tunnel parallel to the Middle World and then coming back up to the Middle World through another opening to accomplish distant travel—is a widespread shamanic technique, known in Aboriginal Australia, Native California, and even in survivals of shamanic knowledge in Celtic Scotland.

DIVINATION JOURNEYS TO AN ANIMAL

A major difference between shamans and most other people is that the shamans have ready and reliable methods for obtaining hidden knowledge to answer questions and solve problems. Therefore, an important task of shamans the world over is to help people obtain answers to questions in their lives.

This work is known as “divination” and refers to accessing hidden (“occult”) knowledge that is not normally available to people. Of course, nonordinary reality is not really “hidden” from us; we just have to know how to access it. Shamans may engage in this work for family, friends, strangers, or simply for themselves. Probably the shamans’ most distinctive method for divination is using the journey into nonordinary reality to obtain answers to questions. Here are a few examples of beginners doing this exercise to ask an animal a question.

In the first account, the journeyer asks what seems to be a simple question and gets an answer of deeper wisdom than she expected.

I traveled down an ant hole I remember, and came into the Lower World fairly quickly. When I emerged, there was a doe standing by the entrance—she was very beautiful. I asked my question, “Where shall I live?”

She turned and began to run down a trail. I ran after her but couldn’t keep up. A large buck ran up behind me and swooped me up onto his back. I was in a crowd of deer all running together. They took me into the woods and showed me many things, little of which I remember. The buck said I needed to learn to live like a deer—what I was being shown were different parts of a deer’s life. I do remember a fawn lying in a nest of grass on the ground and also had a feeling that hunters were shooting at us at one point.

Finally we ran up a hill. There was a small house on top of the hill, but it seemed hazy. I couldn’t quite see it.

I was afraid I was falling asleep and asked the deer to help me to stay awake on the journey. The buck reached up and removed his antlers and put them on my head. I then began to dance a deer dance very energetically. The herd of deer began to run again, but this time I ran with them. My body changed, I was part deer and part human. I had no difficulty running with the deer this time. This felt very freeing and exhilarating.

We finally arrived back at a little house on the hill. I could see it clearly now. It was a small round hut covered with hides, possibly a yurt. The buck indicated that I was to go inside, but first he placed the antlers again on my head (I had become fully human again by this time) and put some sort of cloak on my back. The cloak was made of fur, deer hides, and pieces of antler or deer hoof. It felt special, a ceremonial garment of some sort. I was sent into the tent.

Inside there was a very old man sitting on the ground. He looked like a shaman. He had a thin face and Oriental features. He, too, was wearing antlers on his head. He was holding a shaman’s drum in one hand and indicated that I was to go through it. I put my head into the tunnel of the drum. It was very dark—I became frightened and pulled back out and left the tent. I went out with the deer for a while (I don’t remember these details), but then returned to the tent. I entered it

and this time went willingly into the drum. The tunnel was very dark and narrow. I had difficulty breathing. Finally, my head poked out the other side. It was very beautiful there—like heaven. There was a lake with willow trees around it and exquisitely dressed, smiling people walking in groups by the lake.

I tried to leave the tunnel to explore this new world but found that the shaman had tied a rope around my waist to keep me from going too far, or to be sure I would come back. I went back through the tunnel and when I emerged, I saw that there was another string around my waist—attached to the drum—this one made of gold. The shaman told me that it was to allow me to always return to this other world.

I went back out to the deer. They took me several places and showed me things. (I was getting very hazy here and remember few details of this.) I kept asking them where I was to live, but they wouldn't answer. At one point they showed me what looked like a factory at a great distance, with smokestacks—very dirty. The buck told me that I had to clean that up first. I was getting depressed.

An eagle flew along and picked me up by my scalp. We flew and flew over many sorts of landscapes. I asked if he was going to show me my home. He said it was all my home.

Then the drum called me back.[16]

Her journey involved the answer to her question as well as other teachings. First, a female deer led her and then a male deer carried and instructed her. Since they both helped, it may have been a teaching, and the animal that helped her may not have been "just" a male or female deer, but Deer. Future journeys can clarify this for her.

Being told to live like a deer, and being shown how they were threatened, may well have been a spiritual ecological message about her home, as with the "very dirty" factory. She was initiated into becoming one with the animal (in this case, the deer), learned to do the deer dance, and was given a deer costume, complete with antler headdress, similar to what shamans in Siberia and Mongolia

sometimes wear (although she did not know this). She was aware it was a ceremonial garment. Indeed, when one is given such a costume in a journey it usually is a message to make a replica of it in ordinary reality for one's shamanic work, thereby honoring the spirits that conferred it.

Then she was ushered into the shaman's hut (he had a drum and was also wearing antlers). He taught her how to travel through the drum as a method of journeying. The experience was so real that she experienced difficulty in breathing in the tunnel. She emerged into what seemed like heaven and wanted to go on.

She could not go on, however, because the spirit shaman had tied a cord around her waist. Amazingly, this is precisely the technique used in Siberian tribes to be sure the shaman returns from journeys, and this detail was not known to her previously. Here, then, is a good example of how very specific and ancient shamanic techniques are taught again and again to us in nonordinary reality regardless of our cultural background. Since she was shown this method, presumably she was being instructed to use the cord when venturing through the drum to go to that "heaven."

Everything that was shown or given to her can be construed as an answer to her question, "Where shall I live?" She shall live in union with the deer; she shall live in the spirit shaman's hut; she shall live through the drum; she shall live in the heaven beyond the drum; she shall live in many places ("many landscapes"); she shall live near a dirty factory. Her home is everywhere, as the eagle told her at the end of the journey. This is truly a shaman's perspective on the meaning of "home" and where the shaman lives.

❍ ❍ ❍

The next journeyer's question was: "How can I transform my fear of power?" The account is given via simultaneous narration (see this page):

I am running into the cave. I come to the first ladder and I run down it a step at a time. I take one step to the side. I run down the next

ladder. I reach the bottom.

I run into the darkness. I see the pool in front of me, hold my nose, and jump feet first into the pool. I am falling, tumbling, falling. Falling, rolling, tumbling.

I land feet first on the ledge of the Lower World. The grizzly bear is there to greet me. I ask the grizzly, “How can I transform my fear of power?”

He grabs me with his paw and jumps off the cliff. I am close to his chest. We are rolling over and tumbling into the canyon. We are falling free. Rolling and tumbling into the canyon. We land in a meadow. The grizzly lets go of me and starts walking through the meadow.

He leads me into a pool of quicksand. He has his paw in my hand. I’m afraid. We are up to our necks in quicksand. The sand oozes in over our heads. Everything is dark. I can only feel the power of the grizzly. I grip his paw with both hands. Everything is so close. My heart is beating loudly. The grizzly begins to pull his paw away, but I hang on tightly. I say, “No, don’t, don’t let go.”

But he takes the paw away, and I’m pressed on all sides by this quicksand. Now I understand: I can stay here as long as I want to.

I don’t like it here anymore. I fight my way to the surface and back into the pond. I am in deep water. I see the grizzly on the shore; he’s holding his stomach and laughing loudly.

“What are you trying to tell me?” I call.

He replies that I can be afraid just as long as I want; I can be closed in just as long as I enjoy it; that when I’m tired of that stance I can break free in the same way I came out of the quicksand.

I am moving toward the grizzly. He’s finished laughing, but he’s still smiling.

He puts me under his paw again. He’s running on three legs. We come to the edge of a cliff. He stops quickly and throws me over. I can hear him laughing wildly.

I’m falling, falling, falling, falling. The colors are changing. I am alone. But I don’t mind being alone. I’m free-falling. The air is clean. Slightly cool. I’m falling into a cloud. It’s still warm. I’m resting on

this cloud.

I see a speck in the sky. It's getting bigger. It's the grizzly. He's rolled tightly into a ball. He lands right on my middle, laughing wildly, and takes me by the hand. We fly off toward the horizon. I ask the grizzly where we are going.

He says, "We are going to another level of fear."

I'm not too sure I want to go to another level of fear.

He says, "You asked; don't give up now."

The colors are changing. He now has me clasped to his middle. We are rolling in a ball. We land on the edge of a cliff. We are dancing down a fiery cliff. We are being consumed by the flames. X and his friends are here. The grizzly and I are being burned up. We are both skeletons, but the bones do not burn. I notice that the grizzly is not laughing now. [She laughs.] I think it's funny.

He says, "You frequently laugh when you are really afraid. Laughter for you is both a medicine and a shield. Do not tempt me to penetrate this shield unless you are ready."

The flames have subsided. I feel cold. My bones are cold. There is a field of bones. My bones and the grizzly's bones are running hand in hand over this red sunset-colored desert of bones.

Grizzly tells me that from this point on I am not to ignore my fears. He says that part of my fears are buried in the bones of my ancestors.

He gives my bones a shovel and tells me to dig. His bones sit nearby in an attitude of watching. I begin shoveling faster, faster, faster. The amount of dirt flying out of this hole is exhilarating. Shoveling, shoveling dirt. Deeper, deeper. I look up from the bottom of this hole.

Grizzly is leaning over watching me. He shouts, "Deeper."

I can't throw the dirt out of the hole anymore, so I begin to burrow. I take this form of a mole, burrowing deeper, deeper, deeper into the heart of the earth mother.

At the end of the hole I find a red, beating heart. The heart is beating rhythmically. I lie face down on the heart. As I listen, the heartbeat grows stronger, faster.

I ask the heart, "How can I transform my fear of power?" I ask the

heart to help me.

It folds in on top of me. I am lying in the heart of the heart. I am lying enfolded in the heart of the heart. I am being flushed from one vein in the heart. I have a very emotional feeling as I am being pushed out of this heart, beat by beat, into a vein. Beat by beat. Down into the very foot of my understanding.

I am still in the vein of my foot. I am in the joint of my big toe. I ask the bone of my big toe if it thinks I will be able to find my way back, for I am far away.

The bone of my big toe says, “You are farther away than you think. The bones of your ancestors are in your bones. The release from fear that you seek is supported by the bones of your ancestors and by the bones of your bones. Beyond a certain useful alerting, fear is a waste of a precious, precious energy. The supply of power and of energy being furnished you for your life’s purpose is beyond your comprehension.

“The very fact that you are afraid of abuse and that you ask frequently that your motives be checked, that you turn it all over to the great spirit, our lord, the Sun, the central Sun, to that and that which may not be said, means that if you are far off track in your request, you will be aligned.

“Have no fear. It is easy to say, ‘Have no fear.’ It is something else to put it into practice. Your headaches are frequently caused by blocking incoming power and information. I am finished with you now. Return.”

I thank the bone in my toe. But I don’t feel like returning. Maybe I’ll go back up to the heart. I have my hands over my head. I’m going up the vein from my toe, back to the heart, that I now realize is my heart. I ask the heart if it has any other information for me regarding the transformation of my fear of power.

The bear says, “You restrict your own power with your fear. If you are ready to accept the responsibility of additional power, the power is available to you.”

I feel twitching in the back of my neck. I am ready to return from this journey. The heart says that I can go back through the hole that I

came from.

I'm slowly coming back. I can now look up and see the bones of the grizzly watching me. I realize that part of the answer in this journey is that I can experience my fear as long as I want to.

I now hear drumming for the return. The grizzly grabs me by his hand of bones. We run back across the field of bones and up onto the cliff. We roll and roll and roll. We are now flying over the terrain to the edge of the first cliff.

As we stand on the edge of the cliff, I thank the grizzly for his help. I enter the tunnel. I come back up through the pond, up the first ladder, up the second ladder, into the mouth of the cave, back into my body. This journey is over.[17]

The above journey has a number of classic shamanic aspects. As soon as the journeyer asks the grizzly bear the question, it immediately starts answering by putting the person through a number of fearful experiences: jumping off cliffs, drowning in quicksand, being thrown off a cliff, and being burned down to the bones in fire. The journeyer is reduced to a skeleton, much as one finds in descriptions by Siberian or Inuit shamans of their dismemberments (see Chapter 11).

The journeyer discovers that he not only survives all these experiences, he learns answers to his question from them. He also finds that the grizzly is there to help him and even to give him direct mental–verbal answers.

The journeyer realizes that not only is the animal answering his question, but the heart and the toe bone also respond. Since they are helping him in nonordinary reality, it signifies that they are helping spirits, or spirit helpers for him. He can return to them in the future for additional assistance.

The journeyer is also beginning to discover for himself, as shamans everywhere know, that everything, even a bone, is alive and able to converse with the shaman. Finally, the journeyer does a conscientious job of retracing his route when it is time to return. This is part of the discipline of shamanic journeying.

LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND THE POWER ANIMALS' ANSWERS

As discussed earlier, the animal may reply to a question directly by thoughts or words. Such replies are usually relatively unambiguous. Many other times, though, the animal may answer by shaking or nodding its head, or using other movements. With regard to the head or body-movement type of answer, usually the first thing the animal does is the essence of the answer.

Often a person new to divination journeying fails to understand that the animal has replied through head or body movement, and he or she journeys onward without realizing that the answer has already been given. For example, one man new to divination journeying met a horse in the Lower World and asked the horse his question, which called for a "yes" or "no" type of answer. The animal pawed the ground two times with his right front hoof. The neophyte journeyer was very disappointed, assuming that he had not been given an answer, and he continued journeying.

The horse disappeared and then returned, this time richly caparisoned as a circus horse with a plumed headdress. It pranced around. The journeyer still did not know what to make of it and went on. The horse disappeared and reappeared another time, now doing somersaults and other fancy tricks. There was still no meaning for the journeyer. So when the journey was over, he told me he had not received an answer to his question and was disappointed.

I shared with him a possibility that was consistent with my knowledge: the maxim that the first thing the animal says or does is commonly the answer, whether or not the journeyer understands it. Since he did not understand that the horse had answered by pawing the ground, the horse then undertook to educate him by showing it was a circus horse. When he still did not understand, then the animal showed him it was a trick horse. Although this journeyer still did not understand, other journeyers in the same situation might have known that trick circus horses give answers to questions by pawing the ground with a front hoof. The journeyer presumably was being taught that he had to learn the body language or code of this animal and then would be able to understand the answers.

Many persons perceive immediately the metaphoric meaning of nonordinary animals' body language, even without training in shamanism. One famous case is that of the renowned mid-nineteenth-century German scientist Friedrich Kekulé von Stradonitz, who is celebrated for his discovery of the structure of the benzene molecule, a concept that paved the way for many of the modern advances in organic chemistry. Kekulé had long struggled without success to figure out the benzene molecular structure, a problem that had chemists baffled at that time.

One account of his discovery (there are many versions, but they all tend to be visionary) was that he was alone at home one night in 1859 when he saw in the darkness a serpent holding its tail in its mouth, forming a circle. He immediately recognized that the animal was using body language to communicate the answer that had escaped him up to that time: that the structure was a circle or ring. As a result of his visionary experience, Kekulé in 1865 published his theory of the benzene ring. Finally in 1988 scientists of the IBM Almaden Research Center in California confirmed his theory when a special microscope made the benzene ring visible for the first time.

A fine treatise on scientific discovery, *The Art of Scientific Investigation*, by the British pathologist William Beveridge,[18] cites numerous cases from the history of science where now-famous investigators struggled to solve a problem without success for weeks, months, and years, unable to obtain the hidden knowledge that would provide the answer they sought.

Then, giving up on solving the problem (at least temporarily), the researcher, relaxed in a carriage, streetcar, railroad train, or other conducive environment, entered a different state of consciousness and saw or otherwise retrieved the revolutionary solution to the problem. It is perhaps no accident that a carriage, streetcar, and railroad train all produce a monotonous percussion sound and thus would facilitate a trance-like state of consciousness somewhat analogous to that effected with the help of the shaman's drum.

Since we have discussed one journey that exemplified the need to learn the animal's body language, let us now briefly introduce the shamanic perspective on deciphering the symbolic information that power animals often use to provide answers.

There is no "official" meaning of the visual symbols encountered by shamans in their journeys. Each shaman and shamanic journeyer discovers these meanings for himself or herself. No one is better qualified to know the meaning of the symbol than the journeyer.

This does not imply that the meaning will be understood immediately; but it does mean that each answer is perfectly suited for the journeyer. The spirits know everything about the journeyer and take it all into account in their communications and advice. If the journeyer is a Freudian psychoanalyst, the spirits will be aware of that and communicate appropriately using the symbolic framework that the person understands. If the journeyer is an Amazonian Indian shaman, the spirits will communicate in terms of the symbology that that person understands.

Let us suppose that the psychoanalyst and the Amazon shaman are both receiving the same advice for their lives. In order for them to be told symbolically to do the same thing, they must be told in different ways, since each has a different cultural history and environment. By the same token, even persons who belong to the same culture, such as modern Western "civilization," will be shown somewhat different symbology in their journeys in order to be given the same answer, because each journeyer has his or her own personal history and understanding of symbols. In other words, the same images are likely to mean different things to different people, especially people of distinctly foreign cultures.

For example, if an unmissionized Australian aboriginal is shown the Virgin Mary as a Neapolitan would see her, much like a robed statue in a church, the image would not mean the same thing that it does to the Italian Catholic. For the Australian aboriginal to see the same thing in terms of its meaning, it would have to appear at least somewhat different. Perhaps it would be an ancestral-looking naked elderly aboriginal woman with tousled hair. I do not really know.

Shamans see with the heart, not just the mind, which means that for something to be the same for two people in nonordinary reality, it must be the same in the heart, whatever the external appearances.

Thus, in nonordinary reality things often must look different to different persons in order to mean the same thing. The images we receive from the power animals, and in nonordinary reality in general, are perfect for each one of us. This is the perfection of direct spiritual experience, a perfection that does not normally characterize ordinary reality.

How does the shaman know what an image represents? The answer is simple—the shaman goes on a journey and asks the image. This is one of the many strengths of the journey approach to hidden knowledge: you can work on any puzzle in a journey and, if necessary, in subsequent journeys, until satisfied that you have received an adequate answer.

Sometimes a power animal will give a direct answer telepathically, or in words, or with body language. On the other hand, the power animal may just turn around and run off, leading or carrying the person on a journey to show the answer to the question. As the journeyer is shown each vista or thing, she or he should try to consider how it may be a part of the answer that is sought.

LITERAL VERSUS SYMBOLIC ANSWERS

Sometimes the visual and verbal communications are to be taken quite literally, rather than symbolically. One can only learn from practice how to distinguish the two. With such practice, one discovers that sometimes even an “outlandish” journey answer should be taken quite literally, or at least examined as a possible literal communication before jumping to the conclusion that it must be a symbolic or metaphorical answer.

In one of my workshops in Europe, for example, a woman reported that in reply to her question, her power animal told her to take a streetcar to a certain suburb in ten minutes. She asked me, “What does it mean?” I had to reply, “Since you finished your journey five minutes ago, it means that you have five minutes remaining.” She

immediately left.

I was not being facetious. As she had no symbolic interpretation of the message, and time was too short to take another journey to get additional clarification, the shamanic thing to do was to honor the power animal and immediately take the action advised. She dashed off to her destiny. I do not know what the consequences of her action were, but I feel confident that by taking that streetcar she got her answer.

7

Shamanic Ascension: History, Folklore, and Knowledge

A long way to go
a long way to climb
a long way to go to the sky
Grizzly Bear
rising
high behind the clouds
pawtracks
make a circle
in the sky
a long way to go
a long way to climb
a long way to go to the sky
fire beneath
this house
many fires
these fires
my ancestors
my people
a long way to go
a long way to climb
a long way to go to the sky
dead uncles
dead shamans
they hand me two rattles
they give me

this song
I'm singing
a long way to go
a long way to climb
a long way to go to the sky
—Shaman's song from the Tsimshian people of the Northwest Coast of North America[1]

The Foundation's work to bring knowledge of shamanism and shamanic healing back to the West has been one of its major educational tasks, since shamanism essentially disappeared from Europe and the West during the last two millennia. How did that happen? Up to about two thousand years ago most northern and central Europeans lived in ways somewhat similar to those of many North American Indian peoples prior to Columbus. They subsisted through hunting, gathering, fishing, and, in most places, agriculture, living with their own spirits and shamans. Then they were invaded and conquered by outsiders in the name of civilization, specifically Mediterranean, or Roman, civilization.

Julius Caesar's legions accelerated the imposition of the religion of Rome on the peoples conquered and enslaved. In the classic manner of "civilized" conquest, the Romans imposed not only their centralized government on the vanquished but their official church-state religion too. The later conversion of Rome to a "Christian empire" led to a development obviously not advocated by Jesus Christ when he said, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and render unto God that which is God's." The Christian state-church now made it possible, through taxation, to render to Caesar and God simultaneously. This practice was continued into the twentieth century by the imperial church-states of Central and Eastern Europe, Caesar being transliterated as "Kaiser" and "Czar."

What Caesar's legions did not accomplish was completed by the "Holy Roman Empire" by the end of the seventeenth century, with not-so-holy military and political alliances aimed at converting all the

natives of Europe to the one true faith, regardless of the bloodshed required. Stigmatized and persecuted as “witches,” “wizards,” and “sorcerers,” shamans were virtually exterminated in Europe south of the Arctic Circle by the “Holy” Inquisition of the Church and by militant Protestant groups.

In the far north of Europe, above the Circle, where the influence of Church and State was slower to impact native life, some of the more remote Sami or Saami (formerly “Lapp”) people tried to keep their classic shamanism alive despite persecution that was often violent, the shamans being called “witches,” as I pointed out in *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*.[2] To escape authorities, some Sami shamans hid their drums in remote locations and used them in secret. When discovered, the shamans were seriously punished, even killed, and their drums confiscated or destroyed. Some of these finally ended up in museum collections. To this day they are often called “witches’ drums” by Sami converted to Christianity or by outsiders, lingering evidence of the not-too-distant days of persecution. Among traditional Sami themselves, the instrument is called “the magic drum.”

The Sami were famous in the past for using their magic drums to journey to other worlds, and for painting the hide heads of the drums with maps showing the realms to which they traveled. The painted Sami drums that survive in museum collections typically show the near-universal three worlds of the shaman (Upper, Lower, and Middle) and the types of spirits and deities that the Sami encountered in each (see Plate 6).[3]

Hearing that the shaman’s drum had finally disappeared among the Sami, I wanted to see for myself. In the early 1980s I twice went north of the Arctic Circle in Finland, Sweden, and Norway.[4] There I learned that the past was not entirely the past. At that time in “liberal” Scandinavia, government-supported missionaries still prohibited the use of the shaman’s drum among the Sami people. This became evident firsthand in northern Sweden in 1983, when I, my wife Sandra, and some Sami friends visited a few rural Sami households. I carried my drum in a case.

A Lutheran priest followed us from house to house and questioned

the people after we left to find out what we were doing with our drum. I found similar Episcopalian missionary pressure a few years later among the inland Inuit in Canada, forcing the people to abandon the shaman's drum. As had been the situation for centuries elsewhere, the noise of the drum for journeying made shamans an easy target for identification and retribution.

The Sami shamanism of the twentieth century was a shamanism decimated by history. While the few remaining shamans continued to make special offerings on mountaintops, nowhere could I find the shamans using drums to journey. A few Sami still secretly made and used drums, but apparently only for shamanic divination, lightly tapping on the drum's painted head to ask questions answered by the movement of a small bone object on the surface.[5]

Wishing to learn if anything remained of shamanic healing methods among the Sami, and having a personal health problem at that time, I was able to make an appointment with the famous Sami healer, the late Mikhail ("Miracle Fox") Gaup, at his home near Alta in northernmost Norway. When Heimo Lappalainen and I arrived at the appointed time, the house was dark and appeared empty.

Heimo knocked on the door several times. No answer. We waited more than half an hour. Finally he went back to the door and pushed on it. The heavy wooden door slowly opened, making a creaking sound like something from a horror film. There was nothing before us except a somewhat dark and apparently unused room. I found another door inside, which I started to open.

Suddenly I was shocked by someone who came from behind and threw me to the floor of the next room. Dazed, I looked up to find a huge young man towering over me who shouted loudly in a language I could not understand. He then left me on the floor and exited the room in another direction.

Heimo helped me off the floor and explained what the young man had shouted, more as a challenge than a question: "Do you believe in the power of the Sun?"

This was one of those high points in anthropological fieldwork. Not only had I learned, dramatically, that Sun worship survived in this

remote part of the European continent, but so did an ancient Sami shamanic practice of shocking the patient prior to doing the healing. The young man was clearly Miracle Fox's assistant. I replied positively to his question. Indeed, who could question the power of the Sun?

Now I had real evidence that some shamanism was still alive in Europe![6] I will not share the healing details, but it was done the way Miracle Fox often did it, away from any possible witnesses, behind the closed door of the bathroom! I do need to mention that he did not use the drum journey nor even a drum.

From working with Mikhail on a later visit, I discovered that although he knew how to tap the drum lightly for divination, he apparently did not know about journeying with it. In fact, the last case I could find of traditional Sami use of a drum for journeying was reported in the early 1930s in northern Finland near Lake Inari. I say "traditional" because drum journeying is now slowly starting to return there, partly because of help from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies and my former students, one of them a Sami.

Christianity has not been alone in attempting to eradicate shamanism. Ironically, "godless" Communism in the former Soviet Union also found shamanism to be a threat in northern Eurasia, including those Sami dwelling within Russia. The Soviets could not afford to have shamans constantly in contact with the spirits when, according to Marxism-Leninism, spirits could not possibly exist.

Furthermore, the prestige and influence of the shamans was seen as a threat to the authority of the local Communist officials.[7] Among the Amur River peoples of southeastern Siberia and their indigenous neighbors just across the border in northernmost China, for example, the mere possession of a shaman's drum could result in on-the-spot execution or life imprisonment by the Soviets, or by the Chinese Communists during the Cultural Revolution.[8] Unknown hundreds, possibly thousands, of native Siberians were killed or died in labor camps because of their shamanic "heresies."

The persecution of shamans is historically known for many other major civilizations, including those of China, Mongolia, and the

Islamic world. For example, when Islam penetrated parts of Central Asia centuries ago, local claims of ascension experiences were deemed heretical. Although some shamanic practitioners of a sort still exist in Uzbekistan, for example, they assimilated themselves into Islam as imams and no longer journeyed to other worlds.[9] This seems only prudent. Similarly, in Mongolia shamans were once executed in the name of Buddhism, and in China they were persecuted during various centuries by Confucians as well as Buddhists.

The worldwide persecution of shamans, while not compassionate, was politically logical, for shamanism by its very nature is a threat to the authority of those who establish and control state religions, or who consider religions of any type a threat to their political power. Persons practicing shamanic ascension, for example, often get spiritual instruction directly through the same kinds of experiences and from the same realms as the most exalted founding visionaries of state religions, as we shall see later. This is inherently subversive. After all, if common people can be bearers of divine revelation, this interferes with the creation and maintenance of monopolistic religions based primarily upon the reported words and miracles of their founders.[10]

It is an ironic tragedy that the once-shamanic Europeans, after being converted to Christianity, commonly subjected other indigenous peoples of the world to the same conversion processes that their own cultures had once experienced under the Romans. This Earthwide spiritual destruction took longer to reach some regions than others. While knowledge of shamanic ascension and other journeys virtually disappeared from Europe[11] until recent work began to restore its practice there, it survived longer in remote places on other continents, where some indigenous shamans still journeyed and practiced shamanic ascension, the topic to which we now turn.

ASCENSION DEPARTURE SITES, AND ECHOES IN WESTERN FOLKLORE

As I have long pointed out to students, relics of the once-widespread

indigenous knowledge of shamanism suggest that some contemporary Western folktales and rituals may have their genesis in ancient European knowledge of shamanic ascension and cosmology. For example, many tales include special or magical spots in nature or human structures that are used in ways parallel to shamanic journey practices. In shamanic ascension, an important step is the selection of a "take-off" site or departure place. A few examples are presented below. This knowledge was shared by the Foundation in courses with students, the "Westerners," before they undertook ascensions themselves.

SMOKE HOLES AND CHIMNEYS

Some indigenous shamans in Siberia and northern North America utilized as a focal point the smoke from the fires kept in the center of their houses. They closed or covered their eyes, visualized the smoke, and ascended through the smoke hole in the roof. In the South American tropical forest, the Warao shamans often ascended to the Upper World on the smoke of their two-foot-long sacred cigars.[12] Among the Monguor people of China, a shaman can rise on the smoke of burning incense, which is like a "living road to heaven."[13]

Shamanic ascension through a dwelling's smoke hole probably was practiced in ancient Europe also, surviving into the Middle Ages and early Renaissance as the "witch's" flight, as I have indicated elsewhere.[14] Gradually, however, the smoke hole was largely replaced by the fireplace with a flue, chimneys having come to England in the thirteenth century. Thus the first woodcuts and paintings of European shamans (called "witches") typically show them going up through chimneys.[15] The lingering British folk beliefs about the magical powers of chimney sweeps are probably not unrelated.

Ascending to the Upper World, the Siberian Chukchee shamans visited the Polar Star, called the "Upper Being" or even "Creator."[16] As Bogoras reports, the Polar Star gives refuge to visitors "oppressed by their foes in their earthly life" and "then sends them back with large presents and provisions."[17] The presents were presumably brought back on a nonordinary sled drawn by a reindeer, a classic

way for Siberian shamans to journey in nonordinary reality.[18]

Some writers have argued that such reputed behavior as going up and down chimneys and flying through the air in a reindeer-drawn sled was the pure invention of New Yorker Clement Moore, who in 1823 wrote the children's favorite "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (" 'Twas the night before Christmas …"). Its roots, however, seem to be much deeper, in the shamanic past, as I have long suggested to my students.

Saint Nicholas was a bishop who lived in Turkey during the fourth century and was famed for making magical journeys through the air to such places as Italy. Not surprisingly, at one point in his life he was persecuted and tortured by the Church. That he lived in Turkey is not surprising, since Turkic-speaking peoples were famous for their practice of shamanism, which they have maintained continually in Central Asia.

Perhaps because of his presumed ability to fly across seas to distant lands and return successfully, Saint Nicholas became the patron saint of Mediterranean and other European sailors, including the Dutch voyagers who founded New Amsterdam (later to be known as New York City) in the early seventeenth century. The Dutch made him the patron saint of New Amsterdam[19] and also brought from Holland the tradition of Saint Nicholas delivering gifts to homes during the Christmas season.

When the English seized New Amsterdam and renamed it New York, their culture mixed with that of the Dutch, and their descendants adopted the Dutch folk tradition of Saint Nicholas's Christmas visits. They also adopted the medieval Dutch name for Saint Nicholas, Sinterklaas, a term that is still used in Holland. The "r" sound in Sinterklaas softened and disappeared, as it often does in New York–style English, with the result that throughout the United States today we speak of "Santa Claus." The various clues given above suggest that our present-day Santa Claus may have his ultimate origin in Siberian shamanism, possibly mediated by the Sami people.

POLES AND TREES AS DEPARTURE SITES

Sacred trees, or poles made from them, can serve as ladders to start

an ascent from the Middle World. In Siberia, the home of the word "shaman," such a tree is commonly a birch or larch. It may stand in a sacred grove deep in the forest or be a post with notched steps to make a ladder that sticks up through the smoke hole of a yurt or tepee.[20] A post with notched steps is likewise used by the Mapuche shamans in southern South America to start their ascents, which (like the Siberians) they make with the aid of drumming.[21] (See Plate 10.)

Similarly, California Indian shamans sometimes visualized climbing the center post of their ceremonial "round house" in a way reminiscent of using trees for ascension purposes in Asia.[22] The center post is the most sacred part of these houses, partly because it connects this Middle World with the Upper and Lower ones. Similarly, in Siberia the saplings sticking up from the smoke holes in shamans' yurts and tepees represent the World Tree or World Pillar connecting the worlds.[23]

The concept that the individual shaman's tree or post is the World Tree or World Pillar is found in many indigenous societies, an idea related to the shaman's departure place being the Center of the World, or Universe.[24] In many shamanic cultures of Siberia, the North Star is commonly seen as the top of a pole or World Pillar, since all the other stars rotate around it. The North Star's alternate name as the Polar Star both in northern Europe and Siberia reflects these origins, and our use of the term "North Pole" is directly related.

Among the Buryat of Siberia, the stars were viewed as a slowly moving herd of horses tethered to this North Pole.[25] Similarly, the pre-Christian Germans and Scandinavians spoke of the World Tree or World Pillar, Yggdrasil, to which was tied the god Odin's horse. Odin's horse was probably the constellation we now know popularly as the Little Dipper, with the handle of the dipper his horse's tether, since the last star in it is the Polar Star, or the top of the World Pillar or Pole.

Like the giant *catahua* (ceiba) tree among the Conibo, Yggdrasil not only stretched into the Upper World, but its roots also went down into the Lower World.[26] It seems very likely that the Scandinavian myth of Yggdrasil descends from shamanism, since European

shamanism survived the longest in northern Scandinavia compared to its existence farther south, although the Sami shamans in the north were also persecuted as witches.[27]

The Anglo-German maypole, used in celebrating the warming influence of the spring sun, may be part of this same tradition, with the dancers "tethered" to the top of the pole as they circle around it, much like the stars circling around the North Pole. Occasionally the maypole is still climbed in Europe, much in the way Siberian and some South American indigenous shamans sometimes climbed ladder-like poles or trees to start their ascents to the Upper World.[28] Today in Germanic countries, the maypole may have three horizontal rings placed equidistant along its length, and the motif of three rings on a pole also survives in Mongolia, where they represent the Upper, Middle, and Lower Worlds on the handheld shaman's staff.[29]

The evergreen winter solstice tree (the "Christmas tree") came to America reportedly from Germany, which shares the World Tree tradition with Scandinavia. It seems like a miniature reminder of Yggdrasil, the "always green" World Tree symbolized in pre-Christian Sweden by a huge evergreen tree near the pagan temple in Uppsala.[30] The star traditionally placed atop the Christmas evergreen tree echoes the Polar Star, now reincarnated as the Star of Bethlehem. The lights (formerly candles) on the branches, circling the tree, remind one of the stars circling the North Pole. Nineteenth-century Christmas trees had representations of angels hanging from their boughs, not unlike how the Siberian Evenki (Tungus) shamans' spirit helpers and guardians were thought to sit on the boughs of small trees that shamans cut and erected in their dwellings to represent the World Tree.[31]

The contemporary American Christmas celebration of December 25th is only a few days removed from the (northern hemisphere's) winter solstice date and seems to retain shamanistic elements. It is partially a survival of solar traditions, such as keeping a Yule fire burning to encourage the Sun to strengthen its light.[32] Perhaps unconscious honoring of the sun persists not only in Sami shamanism, as previously noted, but also unconsciously in Germany today, where

large evergreen trees may be cut and erected outdoors on a mountaintop the evening of a saint's day conveniently close to the summer solstice date. Wood is stacked against the upright tree to make a pyre whose flames can be seen on other mountain crests where similar fires burn. Traditionally, families gathered near the fires for feasting, while their children frolicked in the gentle Midsummer's Eve as the sparks of the bonfires rose up into the night sky.[33] Such summer solstice bonfires on mountains in Germany were reported in pre-Christian times by the Romans. A few modern German summer solstice participants that I interviewed seemed unable to provide a conscious explanation for the bonfires built today around evergreen trees on mountain summits.

SUMMITS OF MOUNTAINS

Mountaintops were often used as shamans' departure points, even on isolated islands in the Pacific, as among the Samoans.[34] Much as a specific arboreal departure site for shamans could become for them the World Tree, a particular mountaintop could become in the shaman's consciousness the Cosmic Mountain.

The Cosmic Mountain was well known in the shamanic cultures of Siberia and Mongolia.[35] Just as the World Tree became known as Yggdrasil in the myths of northern Europe, so did the World Mountain or Cosmic Mountain become standardized in the mythology of India and Tibet as "Mount Meru." In mythic times, according to the Sanskrit epic *The Mahabharata*, Mount Meru was climbed through the "power of yoga" by the spiritual master Narada.[36] His ascension appears analogous to shamanic ascent, as I found in comparing practices with some yogis when in India.

Beyond this Cosmic Mountain, it was said, lay Shambhala, a mythic land of perfection. Many have since searched without success in ordinary reality for Mount Meru, hoping to reach Shambhala through various earthly expeditions.[37] However, as shamans know, the true lands of perfection lie beyond the Middle World and beyond ordinary reality.

SUN RAYS AND THE MILKY WAY

In northeastern Siberia, Chukchee shamans wishing to ascend to the Upper World focused on recalling a place where they had seen the rays of the setting sun filtering down through the clouds. The sunbeams then were used as an inclined path to start off for the Upper World.[38] In an analogous manner, the Cubeo of the Upper Amazon climbed up the Milky Way from the night horizon.[39]

WHIRLWINDS, TORNADOES, AND WATERSPOUTS

Another way to ascend to the Upper World was in a whirlwind, tornado, or waterspout. In the shamanistic western North American Indian Ghost Dance of 1890, the song of an Arapaho participant in what probably is now Kansas reflects this kind of experience. In this song of his ascension, he combined with an eagle spirit while spiraling upward in a whirlwind or tornado:

> I circle around
> I circle around
> The boundaries of the earth,
> The boundaries of the earth
> Wearing the long wing feathers as I fly,
> Wearing the long wing feathers as I fly.[40]

A RAINBOW

Among the Chukchee of Siberia, a rainbow remembered by a shaman[41] is one of the classic departure points for the Upper World.[42] In some shamanic cultures this portal is known as the "rainbow bridge" or the "rainbow road."[43] Similarly, the seven bands of color in the rainbow are seen as seven steps to be climbed.

For the Australian aboriginal peoples, the ideal rainbow was one that a shaman had seen rising up from a waterhole, since the same site could be used to go down to the Lower World and up on the rainbow to the Upper World. The Australian shamans sometimes climbed up a rainbow as if it were a rope.[44]

8

Drumming over the Rainbow: Westerners Ascend to the Upper World

> I have [risen] from the earth to the sky.
> I am walking over the rainbow.
> —*Sacred song of a sky shaman in Tuva*[1]

> Between two worlds I travel
> And I understand more clearly those who have gone.
> —*Bayar Dugarov, Buryat shaman poet*[2]

"Sky shamans" in Tuva and some other parts of Siberia specialize in working with the Upper World. Among the Tuvans they are considered to be the highest of shamans, literally and metaphorically. They use no mind-altering substances, relying solely on drumming.[3] In contemporary western Canada, the Beaver River Athapaskan people likewise use only drums to ascend "the trail to heaven,"[4] as do Mapuche shamans in Chile when ascending thier ladders.[5]

ASCENSION PREPARATION

After receiving ascension instructions, including descriptions of the kinds of departure sites used by indigenous shamans, the Westerners chose their own ways of starting their ascents. Incidentally, a rainbow

was one of the several most popular ways to start, both for them and for indigenous sky shamans.

As a first assignment, many were given the mission to explore and then report what they found. Having a mission or purpose in advance is one of the defining differences between shamanic journeys and "trips."

No information was given about what to expect in the Upper World, other than that it had layers or levels. No verbal guidance was given during the ascensions (it could not have been heard anyway over the sound of drumming). Participants were told simply how to get there, not what to find.

Although students often expressed curiosity concerning the nature of the Upper World, they were advised that they would have to find out about it for themselves. The methods used were essentially the same as those described in Appendix A, "Ascending to the Upper World to Compare Experiences."

Consistent with the principles and practices of core shamanism, ascension preparation was kept to an essential minimum so that students, "the Westerners," would not be conditioned regarding what to expect. For example, the words "heaven," "heavens," or "heavenly" were never mentioned nor even implied in the information given beforehand, with only the term "Upper World" being employed. Likewise, a possible encounter with deities was never mentioned.

The journeys were not "guided meditations," and the only ordinary-reality sound the students could hear was monotonous drumming. The intention was that the students should have their own autonomous experiences.

The drumbeat was similar to that used by indigenous shamans to start their own ascensions and other journeys. However, shamans usually change the drumbeat as they merge with particular spirits who then "take over" the beating of the drum in a more irregular fashion. This was not possible in drumming for a group or making a recording of such drumming for journeying. The drumming was either live or, in a minority of these cases, recorded shamanic journey drumming was used. Both work well.[6]

As with the Tuvan sky shamans of southern Siberia, the Westerners ascended completely without the use of mind-altering substances. In addition, most of them had never ascended to the Upper World before. They were Americans, Australians, and Canadians, almost all of European descent, along with some Europeans visiting the United States.

ARE THESE WESTERNERS' EXPERIENCES ONLY IMAGINARY?

Although indigenous shamans consider their journeys quite real, it is often difficult at first for many Westerners to accept that these ascensions are more than just their imagination. Experienced journeyers usually do not have this problem, having learned, through extensively practicing the technique, the existence of another reality. Most of the ascension reports in this chapter are those of first-timers.

Are such experiences only imaginary? This is a question that readers ultimately will have to answer for themselves. To do that successfully, I recommend reading the information in Appendices A and C.

For evidence that shamanic ascensions are more than imagination, I have already shared with you in Chapter 2 a few of the "miracles" of the reality of spirits. Here is another case, one that involved an eminent anthropologist, Edith Turner, who attended one of my workshops. About her first experience she wrote:

> … it happened that in July 1987, before I went to Alaska … I attended Michael Harner's shaman workshop in Virginia. He was teaching workshop participants how to make a shaman journey while lying down in darkness. We were to visualize a climb upward, up a tree, or mountain, or building, or the like. After a first stage of visualization, the experience itself was liable to take over, and we would meet a "teacher" of some kind. We lay down and Michael beat his drum steadily. I visualized my ascent and found myself out on a bank of cloud. "How corny," I said. A figure appeared on my left, a monk in a cowl, and again I thought, "How corny, like a

cartoon." … I went up a little more and came to an entire wall of electronic appliances, VCRs, CD sets, stereos, radios, and a large TV screen toward the right. Pictured in the screen was something dark red, filling the whole rectangle. It looked like a maze of internal organs sideways on, elongated, and definitely unlike human internal organs. Why were they there? What was that all about? … When the drumming changed I went down the way I had come and eventually remembered that I was lying on the floor. The other participants were sitting up around me. We told our experiences to Harner; he accepted them but did not analyze them psychologically. Four months later in November, when I was settled in among the Eskimos at Point Hope, Alaska, sitting in Ernest Frankson's house, Ernest pulled into the room the body of a ringed seal. His wife laid the seal on some cardboard and proceeded to take off the skin. She allowed me to help cut off the blubber. Then she made a slit down the stomach and displayed the internal organs. Wondering, I contemplated them carefully. It was striking to see the dark red parts, liver, spleen, intestines, lungs, heart, and so on, settled together, sliding together with such orderliness and easy movement. Two days later I caught on, as my diary records. Those internal organs were the same organs that I had seen on the shaman TV screen in July.[7]

Following is the experience of another anthropologist, an Australian, taking a workshop. He ascended to the Upper World for the first time.

I enter the fireplace and quickly shoot up the chimney into a lightish grey whirling cloud tunnel. Soon I am aware of my guardian—a pelican with a pink beak.

Mounting the pelican's back, I ride higher with it into the smoke tunnel. In the distance I see a golden mountain rising in the mist …

As we draw closer I see that, built on top of the mountain, is a magnificent palace made of golden crystal, radiating lime-yellow light. I am told that this is the palace of the phoenix, and I then see that golden bird surmounting the edifice. It seems to be connected to my own power-hawk.

I feel awed and amazed by the beauty of this place, but the regal bird bids me welcome. Then the hawk comes forward and places a piece of golden crystal on my chest. I hold my breath deeply as I receive it, for it is a special gift.

The drum is still sounding but soon Michael [beats the signal] to return. However, I am still high in the sky and find it very difficult to reenter the smoke tunnel. When I finally do begin to return, the heavens remain golden, and as I travel down into the tunnel I look up to see saintlike figures rimming the tunnel, farewelling me.[8]

He subsequently wrote: "This journey was a very awesome one for me. After returning to an awareness of the workshop location and the people around me, I found it very difficult to articulate my thoughts. I seemed lost for words but anxious, nevertheless, to communicate some of the importance that the journey had for me. I felt I had been in a very sacred space."[9]

WESTERNERS' ASCENSION REPORTS

Following are examples of experiences of Western students of shamanism when they likewise were asked to visit and explore the Upper World. Some of these experiences have been grouped according to themes, recognizing that there are also many other themes to which I could have called attention. The first ones are grouped according the departure place they all employed, a rainbow.

ASCENDING FROM A RAINBOW

A WAGON ON A RAINBOW

One of the students was a Swedish woman who chose a rainbow as her route to the Upper World. When she arrived at the top of the arc, she was startled to discover an old wooden wagon that she could hear rumbling along it. Nothing was pulling the wagon, and no one was in it. She was puzzled, and when she returned from her journey, which continued beyond the rainbow, she asked me what the old wagon meant, since she had no idea.

I told her that I did not know for certain but asked if she had ever heard of Thor's wagon. She had not. I explained that in ancient Nordic mythology the god Thor was said to go along the rainbow in a wooden wagon, the rumbling sound producing thunder. She was surprised and particularly excited because her own first name was Tora, the female equivalent in Swedish of the name for Thor.

As persons pursue this work they accumulate many such micro-miracles, and they come to understand how one can enter a world of gods and goddesses where everything that ever happened is still going on, and where lost sacred knowledge can be regained. The shamanic journeyer discovers that the gods are not dead.

OVER THE RAINBOW TO A BEAUTIFUL "MAGICAL PLACE" AND CELESTIAL MUSIC

This Westerner chose to climb a rainbow he remembered while listening to a recording of shamanic journey drumming. There was no "ordinary-reality" music of any kind being played in the room where he listened to the drumming. Using the simultaneous-narration method, he recorded his experiences as they happened. (For information on simultaneous narration, see this page.)

I'm climbing the rainbow. Below me it is smooth, like silk. I feel a power pulling me up. Below me I see the hills, and a road. I'm climbing up the rainbow. Above me I see clouds. They are white, gray, and fluffy.

I reach the top of the rainbow. I step onto a cloud. I'm surprised that it holds my weight. I walk along the clouds, among the clouds.

When he went through the cloud layer, he passed the transition zone or "barrier" to the Upper World. This barrier can also manifest in other forms, such as a permeable membrane (as mentioned earlier). The subsequent barriers he later mentions are those between the levels of the Upper World and are usually less substantial.

An eagle flies to me. I ask him, "Where am I?"

He says, "You are in the Upper World."

I am now in the Upper World flying higher and higher … with great eagle wings.

I am soaring higher and higher. I see manbird deities, who fly higher still.

Flying on eagle wings, going up through another barrier, I encounter forests, and trees, and nature. It is not as austere. I keep flying higher, higher. I am flying higher and higher. Still flying. I feel I am searching for the sun.

I am passing up through another level. It is nighttime, a starry night sky. I can feel the presence of our sun. I am pretty far out. I feel I am being irradiated by cosmic forces as I fly: a shamanic empowerment thing, I guess. I feel very powerful and also gentle.

I am still flying higher and higher. There are all kinds of energies in space. Solar winds. There's light and all kinds of energies. Just soaring higher and higher.…

Time seems to slow down. Everything just seems real relaxed. I am just floating around the clouds. Just floating around. I feel as though I can almost levitate.

Just flying. Higher and higher, through one barrier after another. I don't know if there is any limit to the number of levels.

I feel the presence of a bright light. I am flying upwards to merge with the light. It is going to be tough to come back. I am having a really good time. I am flying, soaring, flying around. I feel the light. Flying higher and higher. I go through another barrier. A bright light. I feel the universe is basically good.…

I am in the upper Upper World. It is beautiful. It's like a beautiful floating island. There is a very bright light all around it. A magical place.

I keep flying higher and higher. Great wings. I hear celestial music in the background. Music of the spheres. I thought there wasn't supposed to be sound in space.

Time to return. It is a long way back. I am soaring back. In a whirlwind. In a cloud tunnel. Going down fast through worlds. I'm back.

It is kind of hard for me to talk right now. The message to me is: everything is interrelated. I am still kind of up in the air. Literally.[10]

As in the previous example, when Westerners ascend they often hear "unearthly" singing or music described in such terms as "heavenly choirs," "celestial music," or "music of the spheres."

Similarly, I experienced "the most beautiful singing I have ever heard in my life" as I floated upward during my first drinking of ayahuasca in 1961 among the Conibo people of the Amazon (reported in *The Way of the Shaman*). We are experiencing here much more than just the effects of a consciousness-changing plant or repetitive drumming: we are entering another reality whose existence does not depend on the door we use.

Following are sample reports by Westerners who heard heavenly or celestial choirs and music as they ascended on the sound of monotonous drumming. As always, the words "heaven," "heavens," "music," and "singing" were not mentioned or implied beforehand, and journeyers were given no mission other than to ascend to the Upper World to see what they might find. This next account is from a professional psychologist.

"THE MOST HEAVENLY MUSIC IMAGINABLE"

To my surprise, I began to hear music when I was amidst the stars. I honestly believed that one of Professor Harner's colleagues had turned on a tape of heavenly music. I wanted to open my eyes to see if this had happened but did not do so. "What if," I wondered, "the music was not from a tape but was a gift from spirit?" I focused completely on the music, first hearing flutes and deep-sounding horns. I was startled by its beauty and clarity. The horns became an ensemble of French horns and were accompanied by a lush section of cello and strings. It was so absolutely divine that I wished I could remember every note or have some means of recording it. I am a musician and knew I was not imagining inner music, but hearing a live performance of instruments that felt fully present in the room.

Though absorbed in the music, I noticed I was still traveling. In the distance was a large circular stadium, a coliseum with rays of bright

white light shining out of it, upwards into the universe. The music was coming from inside this place. As I moved closer to the stadium, it began to turn, first slowly and then with great velocity. The structure became thin like a disk, enabling sacred signals to be discerned in the center of the disk, one after another. The music became louder and the structure spun itself into invisibility.

There was nothing to see anymore except for the galaxy. And the ever-present music, the most heavenly music imaginable. I indulged in its beauty until I heard the [drummed] signal that it was time to return. [The drumming] opened the door to an experience that expanded my heart and soul. I was also very surprised that this simple technique could deliver such a profound experience. I want to hear that music again. I look forward to seeing and hearing where the drum takes me.…[11]

Again, this ascension and those of other participants were not "guided meditations," for the journeyers were given only the barest methodological instruction beforehand and were not told what to expect. Similarly, no "voice-over" or other instructions were provided during their journeys. The intention was for the participants to have their own autonomous experiences to the highest degree possible.

A HAUNTING AND DRAMATIC MELODY

Here is the report of another person ascending for the first time to the Upper World who also heard beautiful music.

Initially I had difficulty feeling comfortable about a take-off point. I was torn between going up the chimney of my childhood home, or going up from Mt. Tamalpais. I finally felt called most strongly to Mt. Tamalpais, and I discovered it to be relatively easy. I spent a few moments above San Francisco looking down on all the beautiful scenery of the Bay Area. Soon I felt myself floating upward in a prone position on my back. I went through a layer of clouds or fog and entered a totally nondescript place that was just dull gray everywhere. The most interesting thing about this place was that I

heard music. It sounded like a single violin, playing a very beautiful yet haunting melody. This music was the most dramatic part of this journey. It was clear enough that it was difficult for me to believe that there was not someone actually playing an instrument in the room where we were holding the workshop. I felt myself wanting to ask other participants if they heard it too. Yet few shared that they heard music, and those who did heard different sounds.[12]

SINGING AND CHANTING

The following journeyer experienced singing, as well as the commonly reported feeling of being expected by persons waiting there in the Upper World.

I found myself in an environment of cubes and angles, geometric forms made of crystal, diamonds, and marble, and it was hard and cold. I sort of felt my way in and around the cracks, forms, and crevices. Suddenly I was in a courtyard, or open patio-like affair. There was an expanse of white marble, with a shallow round pool in the center, perhaps three feet in diameter. There were curved benches arranged around and facing the pool. At the center of the pool was a golden goblet or chalice with jewels encrusted on its surface, and perhaps there were jewels within it. I heard chanting in male voices ahead of me, like Gregorian chants, and an answering chorus of female voices responded from behind me. My attention was diverted to my left and I saw another area a few steps down toward another expanse of marble, at which center was a round bowl, or pit, which was blazing with fire. I passed through the fire and felt buoyant but not consumed.

I then became aware of people, and I knew them as the elders, or grandfathers. They were expecting me. I asked if certain persons (from my ordinary-reality self) were there, like Jesus or one of the Indian gurus, Paramahansa Yogananda. I was told that they were at a higher level. All the exchanges were like mental telepathy.

I then observed myself. I was brown-skinned and wearing a ceremonial white garment with a red sash, which somehow seemed

important. The elders had encircled me, and suddenly I looked to my right, up a flight of stairs—wide at the bottom but narrowing at the top, sort of like a flattened pyramid. I saw an altar at the top.…[13]

LOVE AND BEAUTY

I was picked up by a big bird, who flew me far, far away to my spiritual home. There I became a light being living with other light beings around me. I asked the question, "Where did I come from before my birth?" These light beings then took me on another journey to a very green place. Beautiful, incredible green that is unlike any green in ordinary reality. It is a beautiful forest, like nothing I have even imagined. It was so incredibly beautiful and green; it smelled heavenly and the trees hummed music. I was taken into the heart of the forest, where there was a room. I sat and looked all around this forest room, feeling the love of the forest washing over me, nurturing and loving me. Then I was taken up, up, up, up through the green where I was shown circles around circles around circles, all circles of love and how we are all love. I've never seen or felt that kind of love and it was so green. I was shown that my love of trees in ordinary reality came from this place, and that trees in ordinary reality are that loving all the time. Trees are here to show us that love; they carry that love on the planet for us. [The fast drumming call-back sounds.]

It would appear that I came from a nonordinary-reality forest where I lived as a light being in green grace and love. How incredibly beautiful![14]

LEARNING METAMORPHOSIS AND HEARING VOICES SINGING

My first journey was to the Upper World. Climbing up my ancient Oak Tree at the top of a mountain, I find Hawk descending to pick me up and carry me to my destination. I ride her as a small child up into the air currents. She encourages me to step off and fly on my own, experiencing the freedom and weightlessness of being out of a material body. Higher and higher I soar to the outer universe. Sailing effortlessly, I am picked up by Dragon and flown to a parallel portal, to an antechamber of golden hues. There is a domed glass top, like a

planetary observatory. I find myself floating up into the center, surrounded by a library of books of knowledge, all around me. This is a place where I experience a new sense of "body." I am making a transition: letting go of old sensations, learning to metamorphose into new ones.

I am then lowered to the floor and move out of a door into a tunnel. When I reach the end of this portal, I exit by parting veils and emerge into a beautiful ethereal landscape of hills, clouds, and a sky of vibrant colors. I come to a fountain made of the same luminescent hues and hear voices and then see faces of a man and a woman, who appear telling me to disrobe and step into the waters of the fountain for cleansing, a necessary cleansing, of all that I have brought with me. I then touch my body. It still has the image of the earthly body, but it is now transparent and radiating with energy. My hand passes right through my new body. I step into the fountain to experience rainbow water pouring out of me in all directions. I become the fountain. All is rearranged and I feel a complete sense of freedom from dis-ease. I hear voices singing.

I step out of the fountain and find that I am circled by hooded beings robed in luminescent light. I hear a sound vortex and am invited to merge with it. I go into it without hesitation to be restructured in preparation for my journey upwards.[15]

ASCENDING TO CRYSTALS AND CRYSTAL ARCHITECTURE

In the following example, the person used light rays from above to help his ascension. This first-time visitor to the Upper World was unaware that rising on rays of light (as are seen shining down between clouds) was a favorite technique of indigenous shamans in Siberia and Australia.[16] This person subsequently encountered a crystal column and crystal staircase, and was unaware that Australian aboriginals often found quartz crystal manifestations in the Upper World.

For example, the Australian deity-teacher Baiame was encountered on journeys to the Upper World. Sitting on a giant crystal, he initiated his visitors by sprinkling liquefied quartz or "solidified light" to

connect them to the sky or Upper World.[17] Quartz crystals are commonly venerated and used by indigenous shamans in many parts of the world.[18]

I used a chimney to go up. When I got through the barrier, it was like walking on clouds.… Then suddenly I saw a light source above me with rays coming down. I used them to go higher and came to an opening above me. I passed up through it and saw something like angels dancing very gently around a crystal column made of rods. The column was very bright and transparent and was constructed similarly to an ancient Roman fasces [a symbol of authority made of a bundle of rods with a protruding axe blade]. I stayed there a while.

Then a crystal spiral staircase appeared. I climbed it and arrived at the steps of a castle, like kings used to have in old Europe.… Then it disappeared. I returned on the carpet to the previous level and then came back here.[19]

A note: In the above adventure, the Westerner at one point found himself using a flying carpet. This is a technique I have actually experimented with considerably, creating a device involving auditory driving that may resemble a similar ancient shamanistic use in the Near East.[20]

A CRYSTAL CITY, CLIMBING A GOLDEN LADDER, AND BEING TOLD TO RETURN

This person had made previous ascensions to the Upper World but did not follow the training instructions to depart from a place in the Middle World. Instead she departed from a place in the Upper World (apparently the first level). Ascending, she encountered a crystal city, asked to go higher, had to climb a golden ladder, and then was told that she had "seen enough for now" and needed to return to learn more before she could "go any farther." I am not surprised. That more needs to be learned is indicated by the fact that she did not depart from the Middle World as she was told to do in the ascension instructions. Her experience reminds one of Jacob's ladder in the Old Testament and how he could not go farther. It would be interesting to

know if she knew the story.

I went with my power animal to the place I always start in the Upper World. This is a beautiful grotto, with jagged white walls and a healing pool. To the left of this grotto, as I enter it, is a path that leads up to a very high peak … a place from which I can see the whole universe, and from where I get "launched" into the void. I went to this peak and asked to be shown more. From this peak I went through another membrane and found myself on the second level of the Upper World. There I met a man who had come to me in my dreams on the day I was notified that I had been accepted into the workshop. He told me, at that time, that he was my father from another life and that I would find out more about him [later].

He took me to a Crystal City, where he seemed to play some guide/guardian role. This city was located in a large valley, surrounded by alabaster cliffs. The city was made up entirely of crystal structures. Each structure was a different color (clear, pink, purple, blue, green, gold, etc.). Some had water flowing through them, some had wind blowing, some were warm, some cool, but each was perfectly designed to evoke the vibration of that type of crystal. Each structure was like a cathedral and had its own spirits that were humming to that crystal's vibration.

I walked to the end of this valley and went around the alabaster cliffs to the right. Here was a vast slope, the edge of which dropped off to infinity. On the slope, in beautiful light, was a celestial herb garden.

I asked to go one level higher. To get there I had to climb a golden ladder by myself. When I broke through the membrane at the top of the ladder, I found myself standing on an enormous white lotus flower. There were numerous beings at the center of the flower but I could not see who they were. All I discovered was that to move in this landscape I had to do a combination of swimming, walking, and dancing. The surface moved under my feet and distinctions were blurred between what was material and what was nonmaterial.

Then I was suddenly told I had seen enough for now, that I needed

to return to the first level and learn more there before I could go any farther.[21]

EXPLORING LEVELS OF THE UPPER WORLD

In this next group of reports, each of the following workshop or seminar participants had the same mission—to explore the levels of the Upper World—but they all returned with quite different information about the levels and their content. This is an important aspect of nonordinary reality in the Upper World. As I noted earlier, everyone has a different personal background, so in order to have spiritually the same experience (i.e., a perfect experience), it must be perfect for that individual. This is one of the differences between nonordinary and ordinary reality; the latter is not tailored by the spirits to be perfect.

CHANGES NOTED WHEN ASCENDING LEVELS

This is a brief "black and white" report on what one person encountered after ascending through the first level of the Upper World.

Level 2: This seemed similar to level 1, but more refined and rarefied. Here were some figures from history, such as George Washington, Socrates, Plato, and others.

Level 3: I reached this level by ascending a cone-like mountain, like Mt. Fuji. More rarefied. I found it harder to see what was there, but I was aware of the presence of people.

Level 4: Here again was more light. "Matter" was more refined. I heard "music," which took the form of long chords, which were sounded and held for a long time. There was the sound of voices singing like a large chorus.

Levels 5 & 6: These were similar. The music changed but continued, but I could not see or easily make out forms.

Level 7: Here I became aware of an enormous globe, the sun. However, the sun was not hot. I felt myself being pulled toward the sun. As I was pulled into the sun, the last vestiges of my body seemed to evaporate. I felt no body awareness. However, I still felt an

individual consciousness. That last bit of individuality was all that separated me from pure bliss and peace.[22]

THROUGH MANY LEVELS, AND EXPERIENCING ENCOMPASSING LOVE

I … went up through fifteen transitions (or levels) of darkness and colored light energies. I first encountered darkness and a webbing (across the darkness). I went through that layer into more darkness, with a few purple lights, and then to the next layer, which was more darkness with green lights. I continued up and out through darkness with a purple swirling energy and up again through darkness with a yellow-green energy.

At about this point, I heard a chorus that was exquisite, with a harmonic, resonant quality having two different tones. I went up further and encountered more darkness with a purple-light energy that kept sweeping across my view. The next layer brought more darkness and gray fog, and the next was again darkness and purple energy.

At this point I decided to turn around and look back toward where I had come from [Earth]. I saw this incredible mixture of all the light—power forms that I had passed through. It was very, very beautiful and multidimensional. I could not see Earth … but I felt its presence in the great expansiveness of universal life energy. Among this dark background (that I was viewing), I just saw colored energies floating by and through … green … yellow … purple. I had no feeling of need to return (to Earth). I just felt love … an overwhelming, all encompassing … love. After soaking that in for a while, I turned around to continue on my journey and I followed the chorus up, up … into the blotchy, dotted, gray fog. At that point we were called back. So I returned back to Earth through the darkness and all the swirling, colored energies.[23]

THROUGH A ROTATING CYLINDER
TO LEVELS OF ASCENDING BRIGHTNESS

I made a really rapid ascent. I went through a whole series of levels in ascending brightness. From gray to beige, to tan, gold, yellow, back to

white—one after the other, very rapidly, in a kind of rotating cylinder. Finally I got to beyond white, to a kind of crystal color. A crystal color space.

I asked, “Is this as far as I can go?”

A side of the crystal color space opened and showed me the stars. They weren’t familiar constellations at all, but spread around in a way I couldn’t recognize. One of the stars seemed to beckon, so I went off toward it very quickly and arrived in quite a different world. The inhabitants appeared to be sapphire exclamation points, if you could imagine that. They were floating around about a quarter of their height above the ground, and there was architecture to match. I was just starting to be able to converse with them when the drumming signal sounded for my return.[24]

In this journey, as in many near-death experiences, the person ascended a tunnel (in this case, a rotating cylinder) associated with increasing brightness of light. After passing through seven different-hued levels and entering a world of sapphire people, the journeyer started to converse with them. These conversations probably could be pursued in future visits.

ODIN AND THE NECTAR OF THE GODS

I was met by a man in a blue cloak with gold trim and a gold headdress with an eagle on his shoulder. I walked with him to a grand palace-like place where there were many, many people in a long hall in a circle and a wolf lying on the floor. They offered me mead—the nectar of the gods—in a beautiful goblet.

The man said he was Odin. On one side of him was Sigrun and on the other side two women whose names were Lara and Kristin. They were in white. I asked him who all the people were and he said they were my family and that I had met many of them before.

Then a long table was laid and I sat at the head of the table with the man—I kept telling him he couldn’t be Odin. I asked him to introduce me to the people. There was food placed on the table in big bowls and there was cheese and bread.

Then I was out walking on the grounds. The castle was above a beautiful lake, and there were huge grounds with apartment-like places on a hill. He (Odin, or someone I was walking with) told me I was always welcome here and that I could stay here whenever I wanted. I saw Dad there as a young man. I saw Amma and Sigrun.

It was a bright and open and very beautiful place, with what seemed like lots of people. I felt a bit overwhelmed by it all. When the call-back came I was still exploring the grounds with someone.

I found it quite emotional when I was leaving and then quite bewildering when I was there. It seemed to be too much. I wanted to know who people were and I felt confused. I felt welcomed at the same time as I felt kind of taken for granted.[25]

A THRONE ROOM AND CROWN, AND EATING A SPIRITUAL OFFERING

In this experience the person discovers that she belongs to a spiritual family and that "all forms have been used as expressions of this spiritual family." In shamanic cultures and myth, accepting food in other worlds is usually considered an important event.

I went up into the night sky, passing stars and animal forms. These forms were interchangeable, morphing from one to another as I went past them. I was told this: "All forms have been used as expressions of this spiritual family. You belong to a very large and powerful spiritual family."

I kept flying up and saw animal forms morphing through the Milky Way and beyond. Finally I arrived at a large pearly-white, luminescent, and cloudlike cylindrical place. And then I discovered a large Roman-style circular hall nearby. In it I saw a fountain with a turning wheel. [A spirit] said, "The wheel is the symbol of this spiritual family." There were many beings in this hall, dressed in all styles of costumes from different earth cultures—Egyptian, Mayan, Tibetan, Japanese, Chinese, and others.

Then I saw a large atrium surrounded by multiple floors that glowed in a pearly and golden light. It seemed to me that there were many rooms on each of the floors. I did not visit these rooms; instead

I went back to the area connected to the circular Roman-style hall. I realized that I was in a huge castle-like compound. Across the grounds was another building. I went inside and saw a majestic hall. A huge circular table in the shape of a wheel (donut shape) filled up this hall.

I sat down at the table and food was served to me. There were no servers waiting on me; instead the food just appeared on the table. The surface of the table worked like a conveyer belt. Dish after dish came from my right-hand side and passed in front of me. First, I was served a snow-topped mountain, then a forest, a mountain stream, all kinds of vegetables, and other food we found in OR [ordinary reality]. I noticed that I had tears coming down my cheek … because I felt so deeply touched. I ingested the food offered to me, and at the same time images of my OR house kept coming up. I understood that my OR life was sustained by all the spiritual food I've been given. The contents of my OR life corresponded to the possibilities and reality in my spiritual home.

I saw also many morphing images of animals and buildings. Finally a platter of religious symbols and icons was served to me. It was like a three-dimensional collage of religious symbols and sacred places from all ages and civilizations on Earth. I was delighted and "ate" this special offering. It was as though the essence and wisdom of all religions known by the human race was now given to me.

Next I went to a throne room. I was given a crown and a floor-length cape; both were made out of fresh pink roses. I felt like the whole universe was in me. It was such an honor.

Then I was shown a circle of roses floating in the night sky. It looked like a chain of rose buds. My spirit family was one of the roses, connected to many other spiritual families in one big cosmic circle. As we were all connected, I felt a sense of love from the other spiritual families. I felt that they would welcome my visit.

I returned from the journey knowing that all the forms/manifestations were all connected to me and in me. It was a profound journey.[26]

In the above report, the Westerner is welcomed with a feast and, through eating a special dish, absorbed "the essence and wisdom of all religions." The feast and the message are consistent with the sense of welcome and spiritual unity in accounts of the Upper World, overwhelming differences in details of individual experiences.

DEITIES AND DECEASED PERSONS

Indigenous shamans ascending to the Upper World are reported to receive help there from powerful spirits in human form whom they recognize as gods, goddesses, demi-gods, and sacred ancestors. Such spirits can include deities generally known in their cultures, as well as ones revealed specifically to the individual shaman, such as deceased shamans of the person's family. Although the spirits may be deities, shamans' relationships with them are highly personal, as illustrated by Salish shamans, who commonly call them "partners," as they do animal and other spirits who work in tandem with the shaman.

In other words, indigenous shamans are on intimate terms with such entities. They do not believe in the existence of Upper World deities but rather know them personally, much as they know their families in ordinary reality. For them, such beings are not a matter of belief but of firsthand individual knowledge. In contrast, the indigenous nonshaman may only have belief in their existence and thus could be considered an animist.

What happens when contemporary Westerners undertake shamanic ascension without any hint that they might encounter deity-like forms?

PHILOSOPHERS, COMPOSERS, AND THE VIRGIN MARY

The Westerners, with some astonishment, often encountered deities in the Upper World. The following example describes an ascent by a German classical pianist who had been a proclaimed atheist and Communist.

I started my journey up through a fireplace and chimney that I know, and went up with the smoke … and rose up to a flying carpet of

clouds [the barrier] where I saw a small golden statue of Buddha. With the smoke I went up again to another white flying carpet of clouds. There I saw figures in white garments with laurel on their heads in a procession. At first they seemed not to notice my presence. Then they came together and talked over what to do with me.

One man separated from the others, came over to me, and indicated the way up to another level, where there was a bearded old man who was dressed in a white cotton sheet. He sat in front of a dark forest and waved me into it.

The woods were very dark and I was a bit afraid. Then the scene changed into a fairytale forest where I met Rumpelstiltskin in a red outfit, Sleeping Beauty, and Cinderella. I was dressed in a pink gown. A young prince, dressed in blue, came and took my hand. He led me through the woods to a castle that resembled one of the French chateaus in the Loire, with a water moat around it. The prince led me over a bridge and up some wide steps to the open entrance where Bach received me.

Bach led me inside to a huge dining hall where many people were feasting. There was a lot of conversation that seemed to be very interesting. Hegel came over to say hello, and we sat down where Mozart was sitting. Mozart and I talked about the hazards of family life. After a while he rose, and we went to a piano and played some notes together. Then he played alone, and on the tones I flew up to the sun, which had an invincible force of attraction.

I became afraid of the heat and light, and looked for an escape, something like a cool moon. But there was no possibility of running away. After a short, searing flight, I landed in the lap of a woman who seemed to be Mary, the Queen of the Sky. Beside her sat her husband, the Father of All Gods. The sun was there in the form of a large golden ball, suspended in space. I felt very cozy, although just a little bit afraid of the unusual situation. The way back down was quick and very easy.[27]

Following her return, this participant said that because Hegel's dialectic philosophy was important to Marxism, she found it easy to

accept encountering him in the Upper World. Likewise, since she was a classical pianist, she accepted meeting Bach and Mozart there. However, as an avowed atheist, she was amazed to meet "Mary, Queen of the Sky," wife of "the Father of All Gods." She was also surprised that she had found the experience of sitting on Mary's lap "cozy." (She later identified this figure as the Virgin Mary.)

Her experience exemplifies the intimate encounters that visitors to the Upper World commonly have with legendary heroes and gods. The fact that she felt some fear was a good sign, for any experience of emotion, whether fear or love, indicates that one has really entered nonordinary reality. Not surprisingly, this journeyer soon abandoned atheism, and she went to India to spend many years at a Hindu ashram.

GREAT HUMANITARIANS AND THINKERS

Ascending to the Upper World, this journeyer reached a level that:

> … looked like a cross between a Maxfield Parrish and Alma Tadema landscape but was far more beautiful. There was a great lake, and at one end was a lovely bright-blue jeweled waterfall. There were white marble-like columns and domed structures where one could sit and muse. The hues of gold, sienna—very autumnal colors—seeped into the landscape. There were broad, quiet lawns and trees of many kinds. It felt like I was stepping into a painting. The strains and colors of light were extraordinary—yellow, rose, peach, orange, red, umber.
>
> The greatest humanitarians and thinkers were there in small groups chatting, or sitting alone and writing, or musing by the lake, including Einstein, Copernicus, Christ, Dante, Shakespeare, Jung, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, da Vinci, and others. It was very quiet, but you could feel that great discussions and decisions were being made here by these spirits in human form.
>
> I was drawn to the waterfall, and when I got there, I discovered that when I drank the water, all truth was revealed to me. I bathed in it and was shown my essence. It was the truth of my essence almost.[28]

I travel away, fast, upwards I go. I am nothing but a speck of consciousness in a vast Universe. Like a particle of stellar dust, I travel through infinity. I see a dark tunnel that leads to great silver light. I hear music. I am music. I continue traveling through many layers, levels and layers of these levels. I witness much light as I see new souls being embraced at various levels by beings of light. I see Jesus embracing new souls with great love. I travel through a cloudlike layer and visit a level of staggering, almost overwhelming luminosity. There are many Buddhas in this level. I am compelled to continue traveling. I am nothingness. Yet I am within my own conscious perceptions.

I see Earth and the Solar System. I visit a "ring" of Energy, luminous and powerful energy vibrating around the planet.

I feel love for Earth, much love. I am compelled to share this love, joining in the great white band of light around our planet. As I become part of this light, I experience even more love and immense compassion. Beings of Light are constantly working with higher vibrations and light towards humankind.

But I must travel, as infinity is forever. I sense that perhaps I can stay in the "nothingness" or return to near Earth and assist with the great white ring of light. But no, I must go through an opening in the vastness in which I encounter myself. This opening is like a gigantic mouth of a jar made of pure light. I enter and, once again, I become Light. Incredible warmth and peacefulness fulfill my senses, my body, and my mind. Now I experience *pure joy!* I see a Buddha. Earth is the first chakra within Buddha. There are other Buddhas within the first Buddha, just like a babushka doll. The joy and laughter of the Buddha within a thousand Buddhas fills eternity. The echo of their laughter creates an array of colorful geometric vibrations in the Universe. I feel immense joy. I need to laugh as if laughter is me.

We are in Buddha's body and Buddha is within us. Buddha's consciousness is self-realized after the unveiling of many layers of illusions, just as a metaphor of Buddhas inside the Buddha is infinitely perpetuating, while remaining the essential "Omniscience

and Nothingness." I sense tears of joy and laughter running down my cheeks. I send my laughter into the Universe. The drum calls me back.[29]

JESUS, BUDDHA, AND BECOMING PART OF EVERYTHING

Running, flying down. Climbing up the mountain. The big lizard is carrying me onto the volcano. The darkness that is nothingness. A kind of grayness, a new layer? An opening. Some shadows. Suddenly I am sitting on the edge of the new moon, out in the sky. A new opening—I am continuing into the third layer. Very far away, I can see a gray mountain. I am climbing up the mountain. The crystal … a cave? I am sitting down on some kind of a table. It's very light, like a sun, just an enormous brightness. A cave, a teacher? I continue through openings, holes, doors … more grayness, too. I am stopping for a while. Clouds. Up one more layer. I am meeting Jesus, the picture-book Jesus in blue and pink. He is saying, "You shall continue. The old Asian teacher is somewhere near: Buddha." Up again, now I cannot continue. I become a part of the drum, of everything. Somewhere I can hear "silver music," the music of the stars. It disappears and only the drum is there, the light, the total energy is there.

I feel pain in my body. Surprised by how can I feel pain once I became a part of melting into the totalness/nothingness. There in the room, I can see the others back in the brightness, the air, the sound. The call-back sound. I am trying to get back the same way. Jesus, the teacher, the gray mountains, the black volcano. The vulture birds. Down the mountain, through the woods. Here in the room, totally displaced. I am here, my body is here, my mind is only partly here. …[30]

A fine journey, with the usual deities, music, and union with "totalness/nothingness." What might appear unusual is her feeling of pain toward the end of her journey, as this has consistently been absent in the Upper and Lower Worlds. When it has occurred in such journeying, it is when the person is starting to reenter ordinary

reality. Similarly, in this case she was already aware of the room and the other students before she had completely returned from the journey. It is no accident that I often call the Middle World the “pain reality.”

THE CREATOR AND JESUS, FLOATING INTO THE LIGHT, AND BEAUTIFUL VOICES

I am standing before a tunnel, which is guarded by dogs. I see a light in the tunnel. I see silhouettes of dark figures moving through the light. I am very confused. I want to know who the figures are. I am told that it is not my business. I walk back to the beginning of the tunnel several times.

Finally I remember that my intention is to go as far as I can. I leave the tunnel and I enter a misty place. There is a very beautiful red-haired woman with a catlike face and Eastern Indian costume, dancing. I feel like she wants my complete attention. It doesn’t feel right to stay there. I see a stairway going up, and I run up the stairs. At the top of the stairs is a green field. At the end of the field is a structure, which I walk toward and arrive at all at once. There are many beings in Greek/Roman dress. I think the structure is a temple and that they are deities. A woman approaches and invites me to sit on a throne placed between giant pillars. As soon as I sit on the throne a blinding white cocoon of light envelops me. When I emerge from the light I have eight arms, like a Shiva statue.

A rope of light falls from the sky. I pull myself up the rope of light and enter a beautiful garden. I am walking with another woman. We are wearing white garments that seem to be made of light. I’m approaching a teahouse where I know I will see the Beloved. I enter and the light is very dim. His face is in the shadow. I cherish the silhouette of his face.

He reaches across the table and I am suddenly dissolved into music that sounds like frogs or crickets or flutes and there is a haze of light. I stay with this light and music for a long time. It is very beautiful. There are no words to describe the beauty. While I am merged with this music and light I begin to see faces, of both men and women. I don’t know these people, but there is something familiar about them

and I see them with profound clarity.

Suddenly I am walking across a misty hilltop. I see the back of a woman in a simple sari. I approach her and ask if I'm supposed to meet with her. She turns toward me and I sit down in front of her. She looks ordinary at first, but then she starts to change and she looks very rich and very real with a kind of beauty that older women have.

She sits on the ground before me and separates her legs and she starts to pull out food as if she were giving birth to it. Not ordinary food, beautifully prepared food. She keeps doing this till there are piles of food everywhere the eye looks, all around us. This stuns and delights me and finally I realize that she is the Creator, and when I realize this she embraces me and kisses my mouth.

I dissolve again in this kiss and I am taken to a bluff over a beach. It is twilight and there is a beautiful sunset. The sky is striped with colors. I notice that the water is dark and the waves are huge. I can see individuals on a ship out at sea with sails and oars and they are struggling in the surf. I think, "I am completely at peace and they are struggling."

… A man dressed in a biblical costume comes walking up the beach and then I realize it is Jesus. I am surprised at my reaction to him: aversion and anger. I realize that I blame Jesus for all the damage that the Christian churches have done. Jesus reaches out and puts something in my hand. I realize it is a key, and as soon as I recognize that, I find myself standing in front of a solid gold door and I know that it is the "door of choice." I enter the door and notice that there are two exits from the chamber. One door is open and I can see many beings walking down a spiral ramp. I am beginning to feel stuck here because I don't really know what choice to make. I ask if I can see behind the other closed door.

This door looks like a rabbit hole, and I realize it is the way to come back to life on Earth. Since this wasn't my purpose, I ask if I can proceed. I enter the other door and see a spiral going down.

Many beings are walking on this path. It seems almost infinite and ends in a brilliant light. I jump off the ramp and float into the light like a dandelion seed. I wonder how long my consciousness might

remain separate. “Your choice,” I am told immediately. I fly over a sea with a group of eagles. There is the sound of beautiful voices singing the word “home” over and over. Again I am confused and wonder if I am hearing the word “home” or “om.” We are dropped onto a beach. There are many animal beings on the beach where we land. The [drummed] call-back is given and I return.[31]

DEPARTED RELATIVES, ANGELS, MUSIC, AND ALL-ENCOMPASSING LOVE

I was very upset and confused at first—unsettling, as it seems it wasn’t an entirely smooth passing … Two angels came for me and took me to a garden, to a bench in lovely grass under a beautiful tree.

First my father came to me. He waved his hand and a pond appeared before me with small lily pads and frogs hopping. One of them spit a pearl out of its mouth into my hand. I put it in my pocket. Then my father waved the pond away. Next my Aunt X appeared. She waved her hand and I was at the bottom of a tiny sand pit where I was visited by all the plants and animals, rocks and ocean, everything. She then waved this away. Then my mother appeared. She told me she was sorry for what she had done to me as a child. I told her I had forgiven her. She waved a pond into the scene as smooth as glass. I lay on it as a child and was filled with healing light. Soon, I as the child went back into my adult body.

Light was streaming down from above and reflecting up. The angels took me up into layer after layer. There was one with crystal cities, one rather flat with jewels. Each one got more and more simple. There were clouds, rainbows, and streams of light.

I heard flutes, other music, and singing. Light was streaming past. I lost my sense of self—was dispersed with what seemed to be the Life Force, heard *hmmmm*, thunder, and more *hmmmmm*. I was part of an incredible yellow light, feeling very blissful, alive, intense, at times almost a sexual feeling for want of a better description. I felt all-encompassing love.[32]

DEPARTED RELATIVES, THE “GREAT ONE,” AND BEING UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

I began to feel like there was no more “me” in the sense I was accustomed to. How curious this was. I was then thrust forward and found myself in a purple place that was round. It sparkled with deep purple crystals. Then I was on deep purple dirt with deep green plants. Next I was into a ball of golden orange with oriental petals of movement. I was in a garden where I could hear the plants and the angels singing. I would hear babies crying, people talking, and I felt like I was part of everything. I felt like animals, plants, people, air, dirt, and God. I was *everything*. I was bubbling in and out of myself, bubbling from within myself out into myself. I felt like a huge ball on top of another ball. I said, “Where am I?” I heard in my mind, “The one mind, the one all.” Then I heard the flowers singing and I saw my grandfather, my father, my mother, my niece, and my great-grandmother. Since I had never met or even seen a picture of my great grandmother, I remember thinking, “So this is what you look like.”

Then I saw the Great One. I felt like a shining diamond. I felt illuminated and peaceful; I knew everything and knew I knew everything. I understood everything. I was at peace beyond belief. I was power, gentleness, unconditional love, light, hope, excitement, new life, everything.[33]

9

Teachers—Compassionate Spirits Who Advise

> Lots of people who dream [ascend by drumming] to heaven—they don't see God. They just see the people who are working for God.
> —*Words of the Dunne-za (Beaver Indian) shamans of British Columbia*[1]

> My [spirit] companion then said "… when you come here, ask questions … You will be a great shaman indeed, you find out everything."
> —*Words from a spirit teacher to a Siberian Nganasan shaman on a journey to the Lower World*[2]

Indigenous shamans and Westerners alike have commonly reported the existence of anthropomorphic deities and sacred ancestors in the Upper World. These are perhaps best understood as *transcended compassionate spirits* that have ascended above the conflicts of the Middle World, in contrast to the *quasi-compassionate ethnocentric spirits* remaining behind. These transcended spirits have been found to be unconditionally ready to respond to anyone who reaches them seeking advice or a healing. They also seem to avoid giving advice that might, when carried back to the Middle World, cause pain or suffering to any being.

In my teaching of students in experiential shamanism, however, I avoided using such spiritual terms as "deities" or "gods" in order to give them maximum freedom to make their own discoveries, as did

the Foundation faculty I trained. Therefore I introduced the use of the term “teacher” to give students the objective of visiting a secularly defined person.

The students were told in advance that the teachers could be historically famous persons. The intention here included an effort to avoid “programming” journeyers to expect to meet religious figures. Nonetheless, these Westerners soon found out for themselves that quite a few of their teachers turned out to be famous religious figures.

They were simply asked to seek their own unknown anthropomorphic teachers in the Upper World. The assumption was, and remains, that they were not “getting” a new teacher but rather bringing to consciousness one that was already there. Then when they encountered a being in human form who admitted to being that person’s teacher, they were to ask a question or make a healing request.

The Westerners were asked to go to the Upper World, following the instructions in Appendix A, but they were not told its characteristics, other than it was “up,” nor what to encounter there, other than being asked to find a teacher. The identities, locations, and environments of their teachers were entirely their own discoveries, as were their experiences.

Seeking help in this individualistic way is part of shamanism, and it is the essence of what the Westerners were assigned to do here. This chapter is devoted to representative accounts of their experiences finding teachers and seeking advice from them.

A few more relevant items need to be mentioned. The indigenous Salish people of British Columbia and Washington State often refer to such an anthropomorphic spirit as “the Indian” or “power man,” as distinguished from a “power animal.” However, it should be noted that the teachers in human form can also appear as animals or in any form they choose, as well as invisibly “manage” anyone’s experiences in a journey after that person has asked for their help.

The Westerners in the present study were already familiar with calling on power animals for help during their earlier shamanic journeys to the Lower World. Readers will find power animals

commonly assisting the Westerners in their Upper World work in the accounts to come.

Having already gone “over the rainbow,” the Westerners were ready to learn more of the work shamans do there. One important task is to obtain answers for people to their hitherto unanswered questions, much as they had already learned in the Lower World with the help of a power animal. As readers already know, “divination” refers to getting hidden (“occult”) knowledge that people have not yet been able to find in ordinary reality. Indigenous peoples commonly depend on the interaction of shamans with their helping spirits to obtain important, even life-saving information for members of their societies.

After that Lower World task was complete, the next divinatory task for the Westerners was to go to the Upper World to ask their teacher a question. There compassionate spirits in human form are normally easy to find. Often their answers and advice are not what people want, but what the teachers think they need, for the teachers may have their own opinions that contrast with those of the visitors. The visitors typically later find that the teachers were right.

The first step for the Westerners was to find an Upper World being in human form and ask it the simple question, “Are you my teacher?” The answer always seems reliable, for in the Upper World we do not find prevarication, which appears rather to be a feature of the Middle World.

Persons first visiting the Upper World are often surprised by the identities of teachers waiting for them. For example, when I briefly taught shamanism in Moscow during the early 1980s, two of my students who were involved in the then-Communist government wondered if they would meet Karl Marx or Lenin in their shamanic ascensions. Instead they encountered Moses and Buddha! On a later visit, one of my students discovered his teacher to be Czar Nicholas.

Here in North America, members of the Christian clergy often found their teachers to be ancient Greek and Egyptian deities, Native Americans, or Hindu saints, a result that most seemed to accept. In other words, there commonly was an ecumenical aspect to their

experiences. Likewise, agnostics, atheists, and Jewish visitors are frequently surprised to find that their teacher is Jesus or a Christian saint. To repeat what was said earlier, the word “heaven” was never used or implied in preparing persons to ascend to the Upper World.

These Upper World teachers seem consistently to be compassionate beings ready to help and heal all visitors. In addition, each teacher tends to present itself in a form exactly suited to the visitor, regardless of whether it might be an unappealing figure to someone else, especially someone with a very different personal history or from a very different culture.

Now let us read some reports by Westerners of their first divination work with an Upper World teacher. Each student had learned the techniques of ascension and how to ask their own divination questions. This is a method that students of shamanism can use to improve their lives. The following pages illustrate some representative teachers and the way the teachers answered questions put to them.

THE LESSON OF THE BENT RING

My journey to the Upper World to find a teacher and ask a question was extremely profound for me. Once again, we lay down with our eyes closed and covered by a scarf to keep out the light. The room was darkened as well. We were instructed to go to a jumping-off place that we knew in ordinary reality. We would travel upwards and through a barrier or membrane. When we saw a human form we were to ask, “Are you my teacher?” If the answer was yes, we were to ask our question. If we didn’t find a teacher there, we could go up to the next level and try again.

The question I decided to ask was, “On my spiritual path, what could/should I be working on now?” This is what happened:

I jumped off the porch on the roof of my childhood home. I expected to fly but almost immediately was sucked up in a whirlwind that seemed to be silver and very fast. I went up through a floor and stepped out on a glasslike surface … nothing to ask, got worried, tried to go up again, then thought maybe I hadn’t really given the first

level a chance—got panicky that nothing would happen, could see nothing but light.

Finally, the Master I had visited in a dream once was by my side smiling in a mock-serious-chiding-protective-lovingly-being-amused-at-my-panic way. He touched my arm the way he did before in the dream, as if it were a sign. Like then, it burned, not a hurting burn, but intense heat, like electricity.

He said, “Remember?” I did.

I asked if he was my teacher. He looked as if it were inconceivable, my asking after having just felt the energy on/through my arm. But then he smiled and said, “Yes.”

I asked what should I be working on now. I heard, “Just that.”

I assumed that to mean what I had just experienced: energy transfer, heat-light-particles, like electricity. Before I could ask anything further he seemed to disappear, though I knew he was there.

I said, “I can’t see you.”

Then I saw a tiny spark hovering-darting-dancing nearby. As I was about to speak to it/him, there was a shift in my perception, which told me he had become big, huge, enormous. All around me was him. I could see nothing but thick violet, swirling, pulsating expansiveness. I was in it/him.

I heard, “See.”

The word was both a question and a command. He became the original man-form again and told me, “What you see, you are connected to.”

Then there was a woman off to his left, my right, just a little above us. He made a gesture as if he were introducing me to her. I couldn’t see her clearly because her form kept changing into many women. She seemed to be The Woman. It was as if what I saw was love, grace, power. (I was going to add “radiance,” but everything in that place seemed to be radiant.) He said, “See behind the veil. See her.”

She said, “Like the way you came here. Remember?”

I was in awe. Just then the drum signaled to return.

Immediately I was traveling back down the spiral at an incredible rate.

I opened my eyes and felt as if I were boiling. I was so hot I sat up and tore off my bandana, feeling my forehead. It felt like I was on fire with fever. I looked at my hands and saw that my brand-new silver and emerald ring was all bent out of shape as if it had melted!

It took a while for the particles of energy I felt racing in my body to settle down. I went off to lunch feeling like a walking pointillist painting, after Seurat. I'm sure it will take quite a bit longer for the answer I was given to sink in.[3]

The preceding ascension experience illustrates how the teachers not only answer questions but also can convey immense spiritual power, "like electricity." In this case, the conveyance of power was the answer to the visitor's question, as well as a gift for her life. This is something common in working with the teachers: you may ask them for information, and they also give you help. Likewise, if you ask them for help, such as for a healing, they usually not only do the healing but provide information on how to do it to help others. The bent ring was part of that information—about the reality of her experience, and the reality of the power given her.

REUNIONS, A LIBRARY, A CHOIR, AND BECOMING NOTHING AND EVERYTHING

Much more happened in the following report beyond the words in the heading above.

… I floated up the tunnel and there was my Mom and Grandfather … I didn't want to hug them at first, but then I did, and we all cried and cried. It felt very healing and nice.…

I left and found myself on a floor that looked like a library/Greek building. It was very quiet, and I noticed that there were many people, but everyone was focused upon themselves and what they were reading, or looking up. They really didn't see me or anyone else.

My teacher "told" me (in the way she has of giving me volumes in a flash) that they were shaping their path. They believed in reincarnation, so here they were, looking up future lifetimes to live.

I looked around and saw that if they looked around they could have seen that there was more to heaven than what they were doing. Since

there were no walls, they could have seen other people doing other things.

We left and went past a place where people were sitting on clouds or whatever and just taking it easy. We went on by that and came to a place where God and Jesus and Buddha and other beings lived with lots of people around them. It was the heaven of my church teachings, only with all the great masters there.

Next we went to a choir, and that was beautiful. The music came *into* me and my cells became the music. I was very touched. Then we went farther away and I sat, for a few moments, on a quiet hillside. Getting my breath, I guess. My teacher didn't say anything. We just sat quietly.

I asked if there was more. Did all religions have a part of the truth of heaven? Would I find it all here?

At that, she took my hand and we floated up higher and came to a place of "light beings."

This felt like the ultimate of ultimates. They could not be too close together because they each gave off so much light. I was fascinated. Light poured out of them for miles and miles. The word "beacon" came to mind, but where the beacon of a lighthouse shines at the top, they shone all around, and for miles the lighted shining part reached out. They were at one with that whole huge mass. I was surprised at how isolated they were. Oh, they were in great shape, energetically, but there wasn't communication going on with others.

I was surprised that I didn't want to stay, but I didn't [and] went farther up. Suddenly I became nothing and everything at once. I was like the great I AM. I had no ending, no beginning, and yet I had not lost who I was either. I was so large, so expansive. I feel it as I write, but there are no words to describe it. Utter stillness, utter expansiveness.[4]

This Westerner received an impressive landslide of information and became nothing and everything. However, the journeyer apparently forgot the instruction to ask only a single question with each visit to a

teacher. The “single question” instructions are given because the teacher “manages” the visitor’s experiences after asking a question, and all those experiences are usually part of the answer to the question, whether the visitor understands them right away or not. With more than a single question in a visit, it becomes almost impossible to know which question is being answered symbolically or otherwise in the rest of the journey.

BEN FRANKLIN

To reiterate, the Westerners were told only how to seek their teachers, not who they were. This is part of the spiritual autonomy of shamanism: to find out for oneself through direct experience. In the following account, an American’s question was “How can I be happy?”

To get to the Upper World, I went to the island of Maui where the Iao Needle rises up from a valley. I climbed to the top of it and let the mists lift me up through the layers of clouds [the barrier].

I saw some pastel colors in the distance and started flying towards them. There were all these pastel-colored cubes floating around so I started to look for the one where my teacher might be. There was a lavender one that had a door in the corner, so I went through it.

Inside there was an old man behind a white desk. I recognized him as Ben Franklin. He had the little fringe of shoulder-length white hair and the little spectacles. He was wearing robes, and I knew he was my teacher. We greeted each other very warmly.

I asked him, “How can I be happy?” He immediately picked up the small white plastic spoon and started spoonfeeding me ice cream. It was all the flavors that I had never tried because I had not thought that I would like them. They were delicious! That was great, but it didn’t seem like enough, so I asked him for more help.

He had me lie down in a giant waffle iron and he closed it on top of me. I stood up inside it. He opened it and I stepped out. I left behind in the waffle iron this hard shell of who I had thought I was, like all the limitations that I had placed on myself. He picked up the shell,

dropped it into a tank of water, and it dissolved. Then he playfully flicked some of the solution onto my face and dumped the rest down through the clouds to become rain. I felt there was a burden lifted from my shoulders. I don't even remember the rest of my journey.[5]

This visitor asked the question, "How can I be happy?" and was immediately fed delicious ice cream by the teacher. The very first thing a teacher says or does is typically the core of the answer to the question, even if the visitor does not realize it. In this case, she was given all the flavors she had not tried, because she had not thought she would like them. She did not understand that she had been given a metaphorical answer, so she asked for more help. Now, to supplement the answer, the teacher gave her a treatment, a healing to remove "all the limitations" she had placed on herself. She felt a heavy burden lifted from her shoulders.

It occurs frequently that the teacher not only gives an answer but provides a healing, as noted before. Also to be noted is the fact that the visitor reported no pain when the waffle iron was closed down on her. It was not because of a lack of senses (she tasted the ice cream), but because we have never found pain or suffering in the Upper World. A distinctive feature of our Middle World is the near-certainty of experiencing pain, to greater or lesser degrees.

TRUMPETS AND CHRIST

This visitor's point of departure was Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, which he had once climbed in ordinary reality. His question was: "What can I do to help?"

As I jumped upwards, I passed through a layer of clouds [the barrier] and immediately saw a black bird that took me to the second level through a thin film of clouds. I found myself in a world of whirlwind clouds, one of which enveloped me and took me up to the third level through a large hole in a thin cloud layer.

This level was filled with pastel colors, and I experienced a feeling of warmth and calmness about me. I looked around for my teacher

but found no one. Upon realizing that I needed to go to another level, I spotted an opening in the cloudy sky. A lightning bolt opened up the space and became a conduit for my transport to the fourth level.

I immediately found myself in front of two immense, open, golden gates. I started walking through them. The feeling I experienced was that I was entering an ancient Egyptian palace. There were beautiful fountains and lots of children playing around in the water.

I entered a large room filled with dignitaries, apparently waiting in anticipation for someone special to arrive. I proceeded to the center of the room and sat crosslegged and waited with everybody else. In front of me were two thrones. My immediate thought was, "Oh my, I will have two teachers, a male and a female!"

I heard the sound of trumpets. A figure clad in a simple white robe came out from the right side of the stage. To my surprise he came toward me, and went around me in a clockwise direction, and then stopped in front of me. I stood up and recognized the person of Christ. I asked him if he was my teacher. Without uttering a sound he gave me a broad, warm smile, and I knew indeed it was he.

I then asked him my question, "What can I do to help?"

He raised up his left hand with the open palm facing me in the sign of peace.

To my amazement, the next thing I knew I was going upwards through his open palm to the fifth heaven, and I found myself standing next to him at the end of our galaxy, staring at the stars. I was in awe, but somehow it felt very natural being there. Then we both became stars and started playing around the other stars, in complete abandonment. Then we came back to the large room. I thanked him for the sign and said that I hoped to see him soon.[6]

This journeyer commented afterward:

"Although I grew up as a Greek Orthodox Christian, I was really stunned to see that Christ was my teacher, because I had rebelled against Church authoritarianism and dogma. I had avoided participating in mainstream religious practices for a very long time."

His question had been, "What can I do to help?" We cannot speak

for him, for he is the only person qualified to interpret an answer from his teacher, an answer that was perfectly designed for him. If this visitor is uncertain about his interpretation of the answer, he can make more visits to the teacher for elaborative information.

To help you understand how a teacher may answer, here is one possible interpretation: Jesus's answer could be, "You can help by being in peace" (the sign of his palm) and "by going through me" (as the visitor passed involuntarily through his hand), and also, "I am with you wherever you are" (as he joined the visitor at the end of our galaxy). To summarize this possible answer: "You can help by being in peace through me, for I am with you always." I have just speculated on the possible meanings of the teacher's actions only to illustrate how to divine symbolic answers.

In this visit the journeyer, like an indigenous shaman, kept track of the number of levels as he ascended to reach a palacelike structure where he found the teacher. Now that he knows the teacher's level, he will be able to return again to learn more.

He also heard the sound of trumpets. This is a good sign of progress, for he is no longer limited to his visual senses in experiencing the Upper World.

MERLIN

Sometimes one gets involved in a two-way conversation with a helping spirit. The next example is a good illustration of a dialogue with a teacher following a divination question. As I said before, normally one tries not to ask more than one question during a single visit in order to avoid confusion about which symbolic response is an answer to which question. In this case, however, the journeyer's numerous secondary questions all fit into the framework of the larger one that he asked, which was: "How can I release my held feelings into a life of peace?" Since he did not encounter symbolic communications after the dialogue, confusion did not occur.

I started at Old Faithful geyser in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. Flying up the spouting water, I looked down at the crowd

of spectators. They couldn't see me. I flew south toward the Grand Tetons. When I reached the highest and most central peak of this range, I flew straight up through an opening in a cellophane-like membrane [the barrier].

I looked around and at first saw only sky. Then I saw an old hermit with long gray hair and a beard standing in front of a cave. There were trees outside the cave, and an owl was perched in one of these. I received the thought that this hermit was Merlin, but at the same time I felt very skeptical because I long ago dismissed the belief in God being an old gray-haired, bearded man who lives in the sky: Yet I was surprised that this image would appear to me, since I have not read or thought much about Merlin.

While I was pondering all of this, I repeatedly asked him, "Are you my teacher?"

He was not at all welcoming. In fact, he seemed annoyed with me. Anyway, I followed him into his cave, where he busied himself with the fire.

I decided to journey onward and rose upward on a spark through the hole in the cave ceiling. I went through another cellophane-like membrane to another level. There was a tropical landscape over to my right. I walked over and, finding no one, I decided to rise to yet another Upper World level.

There was the most radiant, full rainbow I have ever seen, and I rode it upward on my stomach, headfirst to its crest. From there I ascended through another transparent membrane and came out onto the third level. The moon was very close. I could see both its curve and the texture of its mountainous surface. The rock was black and yet looked white, being bathed in the light of our sun.

Finding no one, I decided to return to Merlin and again ask my question.

I journeyed downward through the chimney hole of the cave and landed on my feet beside him. Again I asked, "Are you my teacher?"

He seemed annoyed at my skepticism and said, "Yes, I told you before that I am."

I asked him my question, "How can I release held feelings into a

life of peace?”

He answered, “Stop doubting. Stop so much questioning.”

I decided to explore this further. I asked him, “How can I release my anger?”

He said, “Stop doubting your experience.”

I asked him, “How do I release sadness?”

He said, “You were there. Remember. Experience your experience.”

Next I asked him, “How can I release experiences of held terror?”

He said, “You were there. Experience your experience. You will release all that is not you.”

Lastly I asked him, “How can I release the fullness of love?”

He answered, “Release the first three—anger, sadness, and terror—and all else is love.”

At that point the return drumming began and I returned downward through the barrier, descending to the base of Old Faithful again in the Middle World.[7]

JESUS CHRIST

Ascending to the Upper World, one can interact directly with gods and goddesses that others only learn about through stories. This visitor did not know in advance that a divine figure would be her teacher, and she had prepared this worldly question: “What am I going to do as the next step in my moneymaking career?” This is probably not a question that many would think of as appropriate to ask Jesus, but he, as a spirit teacher, had the choice of making himself available. As she found out, he was not only available, but he also provided a symbolic answer.

Shamans have learned from firsthand experience that the teachers in the Upper World do not mind being “bothered.” Indeed, they are too powerful to be capable of being “bothered.” Shamans also know that any question that is important to them will normally be responded to by the teacher.

As the drumming began I found myself running up a familiar mountain path that I know in ordinary reality. I continued running as

my feet lifted off the ground, running through the sky, running up a type of ladder. Higher and higher I ran, up into the clouds, passing the barrier to the Upper World. I saw a pasture with a shepherd, but he was not my teacher.

I climbed onto the back of a large black bird I met and flew higher still with him. We flew through a waterfall into a meadow. Jesus Christ came walking across the meadow to greet me; he indicated that he was my teacher.

Jesus was playing with a red apple that he held in his hands. I began to bow before him, to sit at his feet, but he told me to stop, that I was as much a teacher as he.

I asked him my question, "What am I going to do as the next step in my moneymaking career?"

He answered, "Trust."

I wondered what he was doing with this apple in his hands, if he was going to eat it or what. He surrounded my body with a bubble of soft green light, a type of healing, a protective shield, that washed over me. The sky began to become a wash of brilliant colors: pinks, blues, greens.

I looked deeply into his eyes, and my heart sang with joy. It was so intense a feeling that I began to cry. He began to float up into the sky, again telling me to trust, as he disappeared.

In the sky I saw an image of a ram's head, then images of knights riding across the sky. A wave of golden color began to flow across the meadow, changing all the grass to gold. As it reached me I flew with it, changing everything I flew over to a beautiful gold color. Then I sat again in the meadow, playing with sending bursts of color out into the sky until it was time to return.[8]

Afterward she said: "It was not until I was sharing the journey with my partner that the significance of the apple made sense. I am a computer consultant and have a Macintosh computer—made by Apple! It seems clear that whatever business I undertake will produce money—gold. I still do not understand the brilliant colors or the images in the sky."

The above account is an example of how shamanic journeying is useful even in the computer age. It also exemplifies the combination of joy and tears that typifies ecstatic spiritual union, an important subject we will explore further in Chapter 11.

As regards the question lingering in the student's mind concerning the "brilliant colors" and "images in the sky," she can ask about that in future journeys to her teacher. One possibility, and it is only that, is that she will use color with her Macintosh as the "next step" in her moneymaking career. However, we should keep in mind that only she is qualified to interpret her journey.

Another point needs to be noted: her question was somewhat ambiguous. Did she really want to know only what will happen? In other words, was she being completely fatalistic? Note also that asking "will" questions involves prophecy, a very advanced and complex form of divination, something for which she was not prepared.

Or did she really intend to ask for advice to improve her situation? If so, it would have been better for her to ask, "What should I do …?" In divination, it is important to formulate a question very carefully. (By the way, asking "should" questions is perfectly permissible in shamanic divination; shamanism is a different system from psychotherapy.)

Be aware that no matter what a spirit teacher says you "should" do, view the teacher as a friend, not a dictator. If after doing divination, someone justifies an action by declaring, "the spirits told me" to do so-and-so, it is a serious mistake. The person does not yet understand that he or she is in an equal relationship with the helping spirits and commits a serious error in abdicating responsibility for consequent actions in ordinary reality.

The successful shaman balances information from both realities. Shamanism is a system or method for regaining your own spiritual authority, not giving it up, even to spirits.

A FEMALE TEACHER ASSISTED BY A POLAR BEAR

The next example of a first visit involves the practical question, “Where should I vacation this winter?” The question may seem mundane, but it is similar in content to the question, “Where shall we have the summer camp?” that might be asked by a Siberian shaman herding reindeer. The account is in the present tense because the journeyer is using the simultaneous-narration method (which involves a tape recorder or other electronic recording method; for information on this, see Appendix A, this page).

I’m climbing the rainbow. Below me it is smooth, like silk. I feel a power pulling me up. Below me I see the hills, and a road. I’m climbing up the rainbow. Above me I see clouds. They are white, gray, and fluffy.

I reach the top of the rainbow. I step onto a cloud [the barrier]. I’m surprised that it holds my weight. I walk along the clouds, among the clouds.

An eagle flies to me. I ask him, “Where am I?”

He says, “You are in the Upper World.”

I ask the eagle if my teacher is in the Upper World. He says, “Yes, she is here.”

The eagle walks with me, perched on my shoulder. We find the teacher. She is walking along the clouds, her long black hair glistening in the sun, which is high above us. She talks to the eagle in a strange language that I do not understand. She’s still walking along the clouds. The eagle and I follow her. She asks if I have a question for her.

I ask her, “Where should I vacation this winter? I have been wondering whether to go to Florida this winter or go skiing.”

She says she will show me, saying, “Now we must go up to the next level. It’s easy, all you have to do is let go, and the power will pull us up.”

We let go. I feel myself flying. I feel a breeze. It’s warm.

We go up to the next level. It is a tundra filled with snow. There are little trees like sticks, with no leaves, and bushes scattered along the tundra. I feel the snow under my feet. It is very cold.

We walk along the tundra. Above us there is another flock of birds flying in a V. They are Canadian geese. They fly off.

I'm walking in the snow. I'm walking. I am cold. A polar bear comes near us. He is growling. He is all white.

He says, "I am the Spirit of the North."

I am cold. As he comes near me, I shriek. I'm scared.

The teacher says, "It will not harm us."

My teacher talks to it in the strange language I do not understand.

I ask the teacher, "What did it say?"

She says, "It said you must seek the warmth because that is your nature."

We go up to the next level. Again, a force pulls us up. I am being pulled up. The eagle is still perched on my shoulder.

The next level is a forest. We are walking along the forest floor. There is moss under my feet. It feels spongy and warm. The sun is peeking through the clouds. We walk through the forest. We come to a stump.

My teacher says to me, "See how this tree has fallen down. There is just a stump left. This is what happens when things grow in the wrong place. There was not enough light here and not enough warmth, so the tree fell down. Now we must go up to the next level."

Again, I feel a power pulling me up. The next level is a field. There are many flowers in the field. The flowers are blue and red. They are very cheerful. The sun is shining above us. It feels warm.

My teacher says, "This is what you need. You need the warmth of your grandparents in Florida. You need the warmth of the sunshine in Florida."

Now my teacher says, "It's time to leave."

I feel the power pulling us down. We go down through the forest, down through the tundra, down through the clouds, along the rainbow again. I'm sliding down the rainbow. It's smooth beneath me. I reach the ground.[9]

This account illustrates a clear question and a clear answer. The person seeking help speaks of feeling the breeze and cold, and of

feeling scared. These are all good signs that she is truly entering nonordinary reality and is not limited to only visualizing an experience. She also finds out that her fears are unwarranted—an opportunity for her to start discovering that the Upper World is a safe place. She is assisted by a polar bear and an eagle, indications that she has power animals available to support her.

Her teacher speaks with the eagle and the polar bear in a strange language. Unknown to this journeyer, "unintelligible" languages for communication with animal spirits were once well known by indigenous shamans. The "secret shamanic tongue," as Eliade puts it, was often used to communicate with the animal spirits, as among Eskimoan groups, or as among the Tungus of Siberia, who talked with all of nature.[10] We have already seen in Chapter 2 how even Westerners involved with shamanism learn new languages from human spirits, as in my own case and that of Amanda Foulger.

Once the teacher is involved, anything that happens during the journey is either part of the answer or a "gift" from the teacher about something the visitor needs. The visitor can seek more information in future visits to the teacher.

THE TEACHER IS THE SPIRIT OF A STILL-LIVING PERSON

Teachers occasionally may be persons still alive here in ordinary reality, and who may have admitted to being one's teacher when encountered in the Upper World. These often are the spirits of shamans or other highly spiritual persons traversing these realms. Such a living person is almost never conscious of that kind of heavenly encounter. This perhaps is just as well. Otherwise, the living person might make the mistake of acquiring feelings of unjustified self-importance that would cause his or her compassionate spirits to leave in disappointment. The disappointment would be over the failure of the person to recognize that the spirit is not the same as the whole person back here in the Middle World.

A teacher sometimes is an unidentifiable person in ordinary reality. This seems to make little difference in the quality of the teacher's

answers, and it may seem presumptuous to ask his or her name. Yet the teacher's identity may be discovered unexpectedly. Following is such an account.

For years one of my main teachers had been an old man in the Upper World who inhabited a cabin in an unknown countryside. Then one day, in ordinary reality, while driving along a road in California, I came to a beautiful canyon and on impulse stopped there. An inviting path led up the canyon and I decided to follow it. Much to my surprise, I arrived at a cabin almost identical to the Upper World one of my spirit teacher. There was even a similar fence around it.

I could not resist knocking on the door. A young man appeared. I explained that the cabin reminded me of one I had known elsewhere. He graciously invited me in. I entered, and in the dim light saw an elderly man half-reclining on a couch. He turned his head toward me and smiled. It was a wonderful shock. I recognized him as being my teacher in the Upper World or, rather, being an aging ordinary-reality version of my teacher in the Upper World.

We began talking, and it was like a meeting of old friends, although he could only talk haltingly. He had been suffering from an incurable illness for a long time, an illness that had forced him to stop his work as a landscape painter. In fact, he had been suffering from it approximately the same number of years I had known my teacher in the Upper World.

I did not tell him about my teacher, but on some level he seemed to know something. He said that I seemed familiar to him, and he gave me a print of one of his paintings haltingly inscribed, "To my Old Friend." He died about two years later, but now I know his name, and I can still visit him.[11]

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

Two of the notable features of power animals is that they are able to transcend all three worlds, and they can easily be called by the shaman. In contrast, the teachers normally reside in the Upper and

Lower Worlds and are visited by the shaman.

Nonetheless, there are occasions with the help of shamans that the teachers may come to the Middle World, such as when merged with shamans to do healing work, or alternatively to do mediumistic work answering questions, as in Korea. The teachers also may choose to take on animal forms on certain occasions.

A skeptic might naturally suggest that such a "perfect" teacher is simply a psychological projection of the visitor. The shaman's way is not to argue such points but simply to invite skeptics to conduct their own personal experiments and arrive at their conclusions empirically. (To begin to do this, the reader can consult Appendix A.) In this connection, one can seek an answer from a teacher for a complete stranger. Usually the answer is so accurate that both the stranger and the diviner are surprised.

For one person's shamanic journey experiences over ten years, see Sandra Harner's *Ema's Odyssey*, to be published by North Atlantic Books in January 2014.

METAPHORICAL COMMUNICATIONS

The beings in the heavens of the Upper World frequently provide information in the form of metaphor. Why? This is, of course, similar to the kind of mystery that many psychologists, such as Freud and Jung, have attempted to penetrate by studying dreams.

From a shamanic viewpoint, metaphor is a tool used by the spirits to provide messages in a manner deeper than literal communication. Metaphorical communication, when deciphered by the shaman, indeed contains the information requested, but it also goes beyond the literal to teach profound knowledge. One frequent teaching that the spirits give us through metaphor is simply this: the unity of all things. By repeatedly showing how things we ordinarily consider to be different are really the same, the powers are subtly educating us spiritually.

Another advantage of metaphorical communication is that it forces the visitor to try to comprehend the message and, as a consequence,

the effort of decipherment can engender a revelation with deeper and longer-lasting emotional impact than a literal communication.

Metaphorical communication can also teach the value of self-sacrifice in the quest for spiritual knowledge, for one achieves such understanding through the personal effort of decipherment. The shamans' self-sacrifice in vision and power quests, in efforts on behalf of others, and in the personal effort of decoding symbolic or metaphorical communications from the spirits, are all part of the same continuum of ever-deeper understanding and learning.

Shamans use metaphor throughout their work, including in their visualizations of all things. Shamans see with the heart, not just the "strong" or "third" eye, and the heart is awakened by healing metaphors and symbolic communication. The language in shamans' songs is consequently filled with metaphor, and the use of song reinforces the consciousness of unity. Healings most commonly occur when this unity is experienced.

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Teachers—Compassionate Spirits Who Heal

The spirit teachers, as compassionate beings of power, are available to help visitors who request personal healings. When the teachers do such healings, they commonly enact the methods used in the form of a demonstration. The reason is simple: they are not only healing visitors, they are teaching methods for them to take home. This enables shamanic healing knowledge to be revived through journeying and ascension even when a culture or group of people has otherwise lost its shamans and shamanic knowledge.

Visitors to the teachers can ask for health advice. Sometimes advice is all they ask, but they receive an unexpected healing. Similarly, a person requesting a healing may receive that as well as supplementary information to help their health condition. Visitors treated by a teacher in the Upper World are frequently surprised to have lost their symptoms (such as a chronic backache) immediately upon their return to the Middle World.

Other ailments may take longer to clear, and follow-up visits to the teacher are advisable to help make the relief permanent or to effect a cure. This is not too different from modern medicine—one may have to take multiple doses of a prescribed remedy or get repeated bodywork treatments. In shamanic treatment, two or three consecutive evenings of work are frequently necessary if the problem is serious. Many Westerners prefer doing it once a week.

Even with a successful outcome, a shamanically treated health problem does not necessarily go away instantly. One of the finest

North American tribal shamans I have known, a famous healer on the Northwest Coast, used to tell his patients after doing a session, “This is not a miracle cure. It takes two days!” He also believed in supplementary treatment by Western physicians and hospitals, which he considered to be “alternative medicine.”

Indeed, shamanic healing work is the spiritual part of a holistic approach to health, together with the practical way in which almost all adults in indigenous societies know the basic local plant remedies. Shamanism is not attempting to replace any other system of healing or medicine, but rather to supplement it on a spiritual level. Physicians and other health care professionals should feel no threat from shamanism and instead be glad that they and their patients have spiritual support. They are invited to read Appendix D, “Core Shamanism and Healing: Information for Physicians and Health Professionals.”

The powers of nonordinary reality frequently reveal to shamans their patients’ illnesses in metaphorical or symbolic form. Shamans seeking information on the presence or absence of illness in a patient often look for something alarming or disagreeable with shamanic “X-ray” visualization (which can be taught) in order to see if there is something locally wrong with the patient. If shamans are only shown sweetness and light, or beautiful flowers, such images will not help them find an illness or serious problem to be treated. This is elaborated upon in *The Way of the Shaman*.[1]

Shamanic visualization of illness is intended to perceive its nonordinary aspect, which usually shows as a spirit metaphor of its ordinary-reality appearance. These metaphors are powerful, and in recent years many nonshamans have begun to rediscover the usefulness of metaphor in visualization exercises to fight cancer and other illnesses.[2]

“ONE OF THE MOST FREEING EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE”

This is a first-person account from a Westerner who first establishes that the being he meets is his teacher before making his healing

request. This is the recommended procedure when asking for advice of any kind, as well as requesting a healing, since in a single ascension one may encounter various impressive deities or historical figures who are not actually one's teacher. Following is his report.

My question was, "Will you please heal my soul of its abandonment issue?"

I entered the upper realms from a mountaintop in Switzerland. There was much fog all about. I felt I was flying over mountains of Tibet. I could see the mountains through a clearing in the clouds. Then I seemed to break through a kind of membrane. There, to my amazement, I met Buddha. I asked him if he was my teacher. He smiled, closed his eyes, and handed me a lotus. I asked him to please heal my abandonment issue.

He put the lotus within my chest. It was connected by the stem to him. He sucked out smoke from my chest and cleaned the cavity with the lotus. Then he put bundles of lotuses in the chest cavity and closed it up with white paper.

He placed a gold crown on my head as he held my shoulders and looked into my eyes. He put a lotus over my left ear and had me sit down. There were rose petals falling all around. Two young female bodhisattvas put a robe of multicolors over my shoulders and more flowers in my hair.

Then I became a lotus of light. I felt the essence of white and orange light. I saw an orange sphere. Buddha said, "This is your initiation." I was one with the sphere. I was at peace and stayed there until time to come back. When I was to come back, I thanked Buddha by giving him the lotus back. But I changed my mind and decided to give him my heart instead.

Upon arrival back in ordinary reality, I felt the lotus was still connected to me by way of the heart cavity with the lotus inside and connected to Buddha by the stem.[3]

Afterward, the student talked about the experience: "Following the journey, we were asked to relate our experience to someone in the

room. I was at first hesitant due to my fear of sounding pretentious in meeting such a great being. However, I soon discovered that the lady next to me had met Christ, and another friend of mine in the room had met Mohammed.

"This confirmed for me that my experience was one of many spectacular and beautiful experiences, and there is no reason to limit ourselves from going to the most extraordinary places and meeting the wisest of beings in order to be blessed with their help and guidance. It was one of the most freeing and uplifting experiences of my life."

A HEALING BY HIPPOCRATES

I made my ascent upward on a spiral of smoke from a campfire in a familiar place that is special to me. My power animal accompanied me to the membrane. I went through the membrane and saw no one. The landscape was sparkling. It looked like diamonds and crystals with sunlight shining on them. I felt a light wind and was then caught up in a whirlwind and went up to another level. Saw no one.

More wind came and I spiraled to another level. I heard music, singing and laughter. I could see a white marble temple. It looked like the Greek Parthenon. I climbed the marble stairs, and when I got to the top I could see in the large, open center people feasting. I was motioned to come to the head table by a man dressed in a long flowing robe.

I approached and asked, "Are you my teacher?"

"Yes," he answered.

I asked his name and was told it was Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine. I asked, "What can I do to heal this pain in my lower back and abdomen?"

He held out a staff with a snake entwined on it. I was told to take hold of the staff. As I did, the snake began to move. It crawled up my arm and down my back and came around my waist and coiled around my abdomen. I could feel the pain leaving my body as the snake crawled on it.

Then I saw a small fish swimming by and then a large school of fish

swam by. I saw a cup filled with tea, bowls of rice, and grapes. I was told by my teacher that grapes would help keep me strong and well physically. I was to use all of the grape plant and fruit and use it daily.

The drum called me back.

The pain did not return, and I am grateful for the healing. I have studied the grape plant and fruit and have found them to have strong antioxidants that protect the body. I have increased my intake of rice and fish, and I have more energy.[4]

ASKING MERLIN FOR HELP WITH ASTHMA

In this visit the Westerner, who suffered from asthma, simply asked the teacher to be shown "the way" to a healing. Probably it would have been even better to ask directly for a healing, but she got results.

I climbed up a special tree that was at a campsite in northern New Mexico where recently I had been. An eagle came by and said that even though it was not my power animal, it would take me to where I needed to go. We flew upward through the clouds, where it then left me. I flew farther up toward a bright star. The pressure on my chest and the cold of the thin air left me feeling breathless. I flew through the star and came to a land of bright lights and shimmering landscapes.

I then called for my teacher to present him- or herself.

Out of the air emerged Merlin. He said to follow him and then he took me into a crystal cave. I asked him to show me the way to my healing.

He sat me down in a chair in the center of the room next to a table on which sat a box. He opened the box. Inside was a huge hot quartz crystal. The room was very cool, but there was an incredible heat emanating from the stone.

He took the crystal out and said, "This is what was taken from you so many years ago: the heat of your passion; the light of your power. It is time to return it. The hot crystal will melt the icicles of fear and grief of the loss that you hold in your chest."

He placed it into my chest. I immediately felt the heat, and my chest cleared. I asked if there was anything that I should know.

He said, “You are of the fairy folk from so long ago, gentle and fair, but also seeking vengeance when wronged. Your gift and power were stolen so long ago, and it is time to return them.”

I told him I had missed him.

He said, “I have never been away, but now I will be here for you to see and hear. I will whisper in your right ear and guide you in the ways of magic, and of the plant and earth spirits, so that you will remember once again. I will be here to help you once more. My love and my strength will go with you.”

We held each other for a moment, and I was flooded with memories of my love for this man, my first true teacher. Then we were called back.[5]

She discovered her teacher to be Merlin. She described her health problem, and he produced a hot quartz crystal. (She was not aware that indigenous shamans know that quartz crystals become hot when empowered.) He placed it on her chest and then gave this empowered crystal to her to keep. Among the Huichol people of Mexico, a shaman’s soul may return in the form of a quartz crystal.[6]

Immediately after returning from the Upper World the journeyer commented: “I had had asthma earlier today while lying on the cold floor during the first two journeys. Upon returning from this journey, my chest feels much more open and all my asthma is gone.”

Months later the same woman commented that prior to this journey her asthma had ranged from moderate to life-threatening. “Since the journey,” she reported, “my asthma has been improved overall. My chest was at its clearest immediately after the journey; since I’ve been home it has come and gone but has never again been as severe [as in the past]…. I do feel there is more journey work to do that will clear it entirely.”

She was probably right, for in the case of serious health problems, shamanic healing work should usually be repeated until a cure is complete, as mentioned before.

This ascension to an unidentified teacher was experienced by a woman suffering from uterine cancer (endometrial sarcoma) that had been arrested some years earlier. Fearful that the cancer might resume growing again, she asks her teacher to help prevent the disease from returning. She could have asked the teacher not just "to *help prevent* the disease from returning," but "to *prevent* it from returning." That would have been an even stronger request.

In response, the teacher provides emotionally charged, multifaceted, classic shamanic healing procedures, including a dismemberment (see Chapter 11), the extraction of an illness from her heart, and the transmission of healing energy or power. Her journey includes other features common in near-death experiences, such as encountering a bright light and a tunnel. She also experiences spinning, sometimes known as the "merry-go-round effect" in journey experiences.

She finds herself connected in a circle, sharing energy or power with all present, including animals. This awareness of unity with the animals and all things is a common theme in shamanism. As Westerners do shamanic journeying, they spontaneously become more aware of this sacred connectedness. The journeyer herself exhibits good shamanic potential, for she not only sees while journeying but also is starting to experience with other senses, such as when she smells the flower.

The journeyer used the simultaneous-narration technique (see Appendix A, this page) and thus was able to describe her experiences as they occurred.

I am journeying to ask my teacher to help prevent the disease from coming back. I am before the fireplace. It's twirling. I go up through the fireplace. To the sky. I am twirling. Spinning up through the sky. I break through a barrier, and I go up toward the clouds. I come out on the land surface. My teacher is there.

"Help prevent the disease from coming back," I say.

He picks me up in his arms. We fly up to another level. We keep

flying up. We go through another barrier. We go up through another one. We keep going up. Really fast. My body starts getting smaller and smaller. It is really small like a skin. I'm dissolving into nothing. It's dissolving as we go up. I can only see my cells—they're clean—and my eyes, and my cells. Farther and farther, I'm disintegrating. Now I'm just energy. My right half still has skin. But the rest of me is just energy. But my teacher is still holding me.

We go farther and farther. We keep going through levels and levels. There is golden light.

My leg, there's skin, and there's a dark area on my leg. It seems to be bleeding. Blood is pouring out through the hole in my leg. It is pouring out and the blood is dissolving. I keep flying and I feel really warm, really hot except for my left leg. It just keeps bleeding. Blood is pouring out. Blood and globs of things. Yet I am not whole. I am just energy. I keep going. It is getting hotter. Really, really hot.

Now a disc is on me. A round disc. I am still energy. It's being put over my head, through my body, and around my legs. It has stopped where the skin is on my right leg and calf. It sits there. I see the leg and the foot floating off to my right. It has separated from me. It is suspended in the air.

Some hands are now around the leg. These hands are rolling off the skin, from one end to the other. Now they are pulling the skin off. It looks like a hide. The leg is energy. They are pulling the skin off. There's a hole in the leg. There is a hole in the energy.

The hands take the hide and they put it into the hole. It's black inside.

My teacher is calling me over to look into the hole. There are stars in the hole. He wants me to go through this hole. He takes my hand. And we go through the hole. It is very dark. There are many, many lights. Now there's a huge eagle. It is huge, as big as the Empire State Building. He places me onto the chest of the eagle. I am lying there in the warmth of the feathers. It's just holding me.

My teacher gets onto the bird. We start flying up, higher and higher, toward this very bright light. We are going into the light. The light opens. We're flying into it, into another dimension. A deeper

space, almost like a tunnel. Going up. Very far away.

I feel my power animal. The deer [power animal] is with me. We are flying up higher and higher. I feel like I am whole, but I still don't have the lower part of my leg. It's gone. Now my other leg is disappearing. My thighs are disappearing. I have no legs. I keep going. Now I have no arms.

My heart … my heart is beating. It is red, and it is beating. There is nothing around it. It is just the heart. Now the hole drops me into the vessel of the heart. It is really dark, very dark. It is almost hard to breathe. It is dark.

I feel the pulse, can feel my heart. I feel my heart beating. Very strong. Very loud. Very deep. Very dark. It is too dark. So empty.

Now I feel arms, and legs, coming out into the light of the heart. And I feel the heart. I can feel my arms. And the heart. It is very strong. Now the heart is dissolving the skin back onto my body. It is going on, shrinking onto me.

Now there is a giraffe [probably a power animal since it is helping her] and I am on it. We start floating. I feel good. We run with me on his back. We start coming down. We are coming down. Farther down the stairs. Farther down. Down.

The giraffe drops me off in this place where there is water, a pool. My heart feels so big—it almost feels too big for my body. I go into the pool. As I go into the water my body starts to expand. It is expanding to meet the size of my heart. It meets the size of my heart.

I am getting out of the water. I am walking down. I see my teacher. He hands me a flower, a gardenia. I can smell it. Now he is giving me fruit that looks like cranberries, and some almonds. I eat. As I eat, I again feel warmth inside. I feel my legs. I feel energy going down my legs.

My teacher is placing me on top of a piece of stone, and burning incense or sage on the four corners of the stone. There are bracelets around my legs, my ankles. There is a band around my head.

He is opening my chest with a knife and pulling my heart out. He pulls out of my heart a huge creature—some black thing. It's a spider. He pours fluid into the heart. He places my heart back into my chest,

and closes up my chest.

The thing that he has pulled out of my body is walking away. It is really ugly. It is leaving. It is going away into a cave.

Now my skin is brown, and my body is better. But my leg is still hot. My teacher is now cutting with the knife and takes my leg off. I'm bleeding there. He is placing this leaf over the place where he cut my leg off. Now my leg is growing back, growing out from my body. It feels normal now. I am still lying here.

Animals and people with headdresses have arrived. The giraffe has returned. There are deer, bear. There is someone with a white headdress. It's my teacher. There is Turtle. Rabbits. Butterflies. They all stand around in a circle. Beams of light form a circle and are entering into me through my navel, spreading through me to all the animals and the people in the circle. The energy of the circle is spinning, forming a cone shape of energy. It is like a tent, but a tent of light. We are spinning. I am in the center of this bright light. Spinning.

It is time to return. I thank everyone—all the animals. My teacher takes me and we start going back. He again is holding me and takes me down through the levels. Down, down, down. Past the eagle. Down. We come to the first level. I thank him. Now I start to go down through the sky. And down, through the chimney. And onto the floor. I am back.

I am still spinning. It was an amazing healing. Especially with my heart. Something was really removed from my heart, and I experienced my own heart. Everywhere I went something was done to take care of me.[7]

The removal of an illness seen as an ugly entity (here the spider) is a classic form of shamanic diagnosis and intrusion extraction that regularly occurs whether or not the visitors to the teachers have ever heard of it. The spirits themselves are perennial teachers of shamanic methods, such as extraction.

Spiritual extraction is used to remove illness or pain from a localized part of the patient such as (in this case) the person's heart,

as explained in *The Way of the Shaman*.[8] With regard to extracting spiders and hearts, keep in mind that we are working in nonordinary reality, and these are spider and heart spirits. Likewise, the teachings being illustrated here are for use in shamanic healing, not for use in ordinary reality!

Due to a lack of resources to do follow-up studies in this and the vast majority of cases, we unfortunately do not know if she was cured of her cancer.

REQUESTING ALLEVIATION OF A BACKACHE FROM A DECEASED INDIAN GURU

Working with an Upper World teacher who has previously been a spiritual teacher in ordinary reality is a widespread shamanic practice, reminding us how the barrier between the dead and living is not particularly relevant to the shaman. In this journey, a woman asks that her backache be cured by her Upper World teacher, a famous deceased yogi. She takes with her a nonordinary opal that he had previously given to her there.

A classic shamanic theme appearing in her journey, something of which she had never heard, is the crossing of a thin bridge over a dangerous chasm to reach a teacher, deity, deceased person, or another realm. The bridge, she notes, is no wider than a thread. The Altaic shamans of Siberia similarly describe the bridge as having "the breadth of a hair,"[9] and the thread across a chasm is known to some indigenous shamans elsewhere. She is terrified as she crosses it, which is a good sign, for her fear indicates that she is really in nonordinary reality and is taking it seriously. Now, her journey:

My jaguar took me to the Upper World and through the membrane. He took me up a very rocky ledge. I could hear the stones tumbling down. He took me to a place where there is a long thread and left me there. I had to walk over this thread, which scared me to death. I very carefully put one foot in front of the other because I'm terrified of heights, but I knew I had to go alone.

I've done it twice before. It's like being on this thread with clouds going over this huge chasm. It really scared me and I was breathless

and afraid to look down, but I went. I got across. There's a bush there that I parted and walked through.

It's the side of a mountain in the Himalayas. I walked up some steps and entered a cave there where he lives. My teacher is an Indian guru whom I know of historically.

I'm a person who never has pain anywhere, but sitting here these last days I have had this terrific pain in my back.

I told my teacher, "I want this pain to leave because it really hurts and I'm not used to it."

He said, "Let's sit and meditate. Do you have your opal?"

I said, "Yes."

He put it in my left hand and sat in the lotus position. I did the same. I meditated with my yogi and then after a short period of meditation he directed me to go outside the cave where there was a little stream.

I walked in that stream and came to a great pool of water. I got in and immersed myself. It turned into—it was really dark—a very narrow opening. I went into that and then I realized I was in my spinal column. I could see the vertebrae as I went down to the lower back area where the pain is. I heard a sound like electricity crackling, and it went around my body counterclockwise. Then the call-back drumming began. I came up my spinal column, back up to the cave; I thanked the yogi, and I walked across the bridge. My panther was there waiting for me. We came back and he brought me through the membrane and back here.

And now the pain's really gone.[10]

REQUESTING A HEALING AND PASSING THROUGH AN INTERWORLD TO A GOLDEN CITY

My journey to the Upper World was very emotional and resulted in much heart healing. It was a journey about relationships with [deceased] people, and I went seeking healing. I had to go to the second level to find light and people. The first level was murky and scary, and I required the help of Whale throughout my first Upper World journey. When I broke through a bank of clouds, I saw a golden city, comprised of many different periods and styles of

architecture.

And the people walking the streets came from many different time periods. When I saw my mother, I started to cry. She had died in 1988, and I had not been able to tell her good-bye. She held me a long time and told me she loved me and that she was here for me, as were all the others who had gone before.

Then I saw Jim Smith—he looked just as he had the last time I saw him: darkly handsome, just twenty-seven years old. Jim was the great love of my life, and he died in 1976.

I asked him if he was my teacher, and he said he was. I told him I was requesting healing from my addictive behavior. He disappeared. I found myself walking beside a row of empty graves with blank tombstones heading them.

I floated above the graves and was suddenly surrounded by spirits. They told me, "This is what you fear."

At that moment, I didn't fear being with them; we were all one. Next, I was walking down a street, looking in windows of buildings as I passed. Inside each was a scene from my life when I had felt loved or sacred. At that point, the drums called me back. I had been crying for most of the journey, not from grief, but from gratitude for all the spirits I had with me.[11]

Note her remarks about how the first level was "murky and scary." From extensive experience, I can say with confidence that this was not the first level, although it seemed like it to her. It was really what I call an "Interworld," a zone at the edge of the Middle World and Upper World, as well as at the juncture of the Middle and Lower Worlds. The Interworld commonly does not appear unless the journeyer is preoccupied with recently deceased persons and death, as apparently was her case.

When this was the preoccupation of the Westerners who participated in these exercises, they often were shown a "murky" area (just as she said) that is between worlds. It probably could also be called "limbo," but that is a culturally laden word, and "Interworld" was not inspired by it. The Interworld appears to be a kind of way

station for human spirits or souls who forlornly wait, like a mass of listless unemployed people in a colorless, dingy environment.

When a shamanic journeyer passes through, these spirits may reach out their hands to plead for assistance to move beyond. They are needy, but they are powerless and harmless. Indeed, one of the classic tasks of the shaman cross-culturally is to act as a psychopomp, or conductor of souls, to help deceased persons move on to one of the worlds where they will be content. Even without a psychopomp, those in the Interworlds seem to move gradually to a better place.

Incidentally, as I may have said before, in their drum journeys the Westerners never seemed to find anything beyond our Middle World that was a place of punishment or torment. In other words, they did not find anything resembling the stereotypic "hell" except for aspects of our own world!

This account also illustrates how a teacher may "manage" an answer or a healing in a journey after disappearing.

HEADACHE TREATMENT LESSONS WITH CROW MAN

The following experience is a good example of "tough love" by a teacher to produce a successful healing and to educate the visitor at the same time. A student training to be a certified shamanic counselor wanted to know, "How can I stop these headaches?" He might have been better off if he had just asked, "Please cure my headaches." But he did not; he asked how "I" could do it.

Crow, a power animal of this student, leads him to Owl (a traditional Western sign of wisdom), who then metamorphoses into a man who is his teacher. Upper World teachers are compassionate, but they also may resort to tough love with humor, as in this case. They may also engage in extended dialogue, as in the following. The journey was recorded using the simultaneous-narration technique (information on this method is in Appendix A).

I am overlooking the valley. It is a very clear day and I can see right to the coast. Owl is with me. And we take off. Fly circling around the mountaintop and on upward. Have a beautiful panorama coming up.

We are up high enough now. We can see the islands, around the sea coast. In the other direction I can see up on into Quebec. New Brunswick.

Getting higher and higher … just a broad expanse of a sheet of clouds now. We are going through it. Okay, we just made it through. The higher we get, the darker it seems to get. Air is getting very thin. Coming to another cloud bank. We go through it … Owl is just leaving me off along the top of this cloud bank. They are like concentric circles of light that we're rushing through—like a tunnel again. Except it is not really … it doesn't really have solid boundaries like a tunnel. It is just these circles. Different-colored light. Red, violet, green, white. And we are just zooming on through with clouds passing underneath us. And now we are coming to a misty area that is kind of … and passing through it. Flying pretty much horizontally.

Okay, now we are coming out of the mist and there is a landscape underneath us of green rolling hills. And I look down on one of the hills and there is a structure that looks like three cones. There is a big cone in the center and a small cone on each side. And we go down and there is a stairway that leads up to the entrance of the center cone. And Owl says to go on up the stairs and knock at the door. And he says he will wait outside.

So I go up and knock on the door. The doors open. And there is nobody there. Now there is a crow. There is a big black crow flying right in front of me. And he leaves me. He is flying right into the center of the building. And there is a little chamber right in the center. A little—like a cylinder. A cylindrical chamber that runs right up to the top of the cone. And there is a doorway there. And as he flies close to it, the door opens, and he goes in. And I follow him. And he sits down on a cushion and he turns into a man.

He is a small man with light-brown skin. And he is now hanging up his shirt. He is wearing pants. Beside him there is a little pouch full of arrows. And he is just sitting there cross-legged. And he is—it looks like he is meditating. He is just sitting there quietly. And then he looks off and he beckons me to sit down across from him. This is really weird—what he says to me—he is saying, "I already know you.

But it is not going to hurt you to go through this again."

He gives me a green arrow and a red arrow. And now he is giving me a feather. And he says to me, "You have got too much going on. You have got a hundred thoughts going in a hundred directions. You don't know whether you are coming or you are going. I am going to give you this feather. And when you have got too much going on, I want you to take this feather and I want you to take it in your right hand, and I want you to hold it up all of a sudden, like raise it up at a right angle, and when you do that, all that nonsense is going to stop." And he says go ahead and try it.

I feel a little silly about it. But I go ahead and I take it and I hold it in my right hand, straight out and up.

So here goes. I am turning it. Okay, I flick it up at a right angle to my arm. Just hold it there. And it feels like the drumming has slowed down. It feels like my thoughts have slowed down. It feels like everything is in slow motion. And he says to me, "Now, don't you have something you want to talk to me about?"

"Yes, I do. I have a question. I want to know how to stop these headaches. How can I stop these headaches?"

And he says, "Do you have a headache?"

And I say, "No, I don't have a headache."

He says, "Well, what are you worried about?"

And I say, "Well, I am worried about getting a headache."

And he says, "Well, why are you worried about getting a headache? You don't have a headache now."

I say, "Yes, but I am pretty sure I am going to get a headache."

So he says, "Well, what makes you so sure you are going to get a headache?"

I say, "I always get a headache."

He says, "You don't have a headache now."

I say, "Yes, but I am going to get one."

He says, "How do you know that?"

And I say, "I always do."

But he says, "You don't have one now."

"So, okay, look, I don't have one now. But I get these things like

maybe once or twice a week. And they really get in the way of doing what I am trying to do."

This guy is just looking at me like I am a complete idiot. Like I am not making any sense at all. Okay, now he is looking at me in dead earnest and he says, "You know, I can see that these headaches are really important to you. They have become like a real companion."

So he continues, "I suppose if the headaches were to go away, you would feel lonesome. And you would start missing them. Probably after you had been without them for two or three weeks, you would start to dream about them. You would make a shamanic journey to the Upper World to ask, 'Couldn't I please have just one more headache? Just to say good-bye?' "

"Yes, I really have unfinished business with that headache," I say. "I never really separated from that headache properly."

And so he says, "I could see how you are really attached to that headache. If you would like, I can give you a headache so that you can begin to separate from it."

And with that, he reaches behind him and pulls a hammer out of a toolbox.

And I say, "No, no, I don't really want to deal with that."

And he says, "I really think you should, because you know it is not good to just go cold turkey with one of these things. You need to phase these headaches out gradually. You know, as long as you have been deriving such torture from having this relationship with this headache, it might be bad for you to just get rid of it and not have it anymore. You might be really uncomfortable and go through withdrawal and start shaking, and you might start acting a little crazy. So I really ought to hit you on the head with this hammer because I am kind of worried about you, about what you are going to do without having a headache."

I say, "Well, I don't really think I want to do that. I mean, I don't want you to hit me on the head with a hammer because that would hurt. And that is what I am coming to you for—I want to get rid of that."

So he puts the hammer away and he says, "You know, you white

people are all crazy. You tell me you don't want a headache, but it really feels to me that it is so important to you. I am just a teacher who is here to help you. I want to give you what is most important to you. I don't want you to go away from here feeling like you didn't get what you wanted. I mean, it is my job to try to give you what is most important to you."

"Man! I am feeling really confused."

He says, "That is good. It is good that you feel confused. Yes, that is good that you feel confused." And then he says, "Are you sure you wouldn't rather have a headache?"

And I say, "No, I don't think I want to have a headache, but I am really feeling confused."

And he says, "Well, you now have a few minutes left on this [drumming] tape. Are you sure you want to feel confused all the rest of the tape? I know it is not familiar to you to feel confused."

I say, "Yes, it feels real uncomfortable. Like I don't know what to talk with you about."

He says, "Well, if you want certainty, if you think being confused is bad and if you want to be sure about something…." He reaches back into the toolbox and pulls out the hammer. "I will hit you right on top of the head. You will have a nice headache, and your whole life will be compressed into a nice little package. You would know exactly what you would have to do. And you wouldn't be confused anymore. And all the rest of your day will be taken care of. It will be real simple. You can feel bad, you can go take a couple of Tylenol, and you can go to bed. Then the problem of living the rest of the day in confusion will be solved."

I say, "Man, you are a trip. No, I don't want you to hit me with the hammer. Put the damn hammer away!"

He says, "You sound a little bit angry."

"No. I am not angry."

He says, "Well, you told me to put the damn hammer away! That sounds a little angry to me."

I say, "I guess I was feeling a little bit angry because I am feeling frustrated. Because I am feeling confused right now. This is not what I

expected when I came up here."

He says, "What are you laughing about if you are angry?"

"I am not laughing."

He says, "Yes, you were. You just chuckled."

"Well, yes, because this whole thing is so weird."

He gets up and says, "Come here, I want to show you something."

I follow him out the front door and I go around the side into the door of one of the smaller cones. Right as we go through the door, he says, "I want you to stop right here. This is going to be really heavy."

Then he shakes his head and says, "I don't know. I don't know if you have got the power to do this. You may not make it through this one. This is heavy duty, this stuff here. I don't know if you want to be a shamanic counselor this bad."

I am saying to him, "Come on, why did you bring me here if you didn't want to show it to me?"

"Well, okay, but don't blame me if you get clobbered."

So we go down these stairs and we come out in a rain that is full of all different kinds of minerals. There are crystals—all different kinds of crystals. There is quartz. There is—I don't know the names of them. There is yellow and green and red. They all seem to be shining by their own light.

He looks at me and says, "What do you think of this?"

I say, "This is really powerful. I can really feel the power in this place."

He says, "Yes, this is real industrial-strength shamanism, isn't it? This is big medicine."

"Why did you say you didn't know if I could handle this?"

He says, "You really have such a thing going. Such a good thing going with those headaches that I don't know if you would really be interested in this. Because this is pretty flashy. And the energy is real high here. Yes, you see all kinds of neat stuff here. Sit down here for a while and you will get real confused. Yes, you will see beings of light and all kinds of spirits and real powerful stuff starting to happen here. It is probably going to be real confusing and disorienting to you. You will probably come out of here after a couple of minutes begging me

to give you headaches, so you will again know what you are doing."

This guy has got no sympathy at all.

He says, "What do you mean, I have got no sympathy at all? I understand perfectly what your dilemma is, and I am offering to help you with it. You don't have a headache right now and you don't know what to do about it." He goes on: "You know, you work real hard to create those headaches. Maybe you don't have one for a couple of days, and during those two days you have been really working steadily to have a headache. I just want to give you what you need. You better go home now, because the drum is sounding [the call-back signal]. Whenever you want a headache, come on by, and I will be glad to oblige you."

So now here I come. Back down through the cloud layer. Back onto the mountaintop. Now I am coming back into the room. *And I don't have a headache*.[12]

The Westerner in this account was doing his journey out loud in the silent presence of the shamanic counselor. Immediately after the journey the shamanic counselor asked, "What do you believe happened?"

Student: "I don't even know what to say. I am feeling like I just met somebody who has my number."

Counselor: "Knows you a little too well."

Student: "The interesting thing is that I have met this guy before. But I have never had that kind of interaction."

Counselor: "Do you think your question was answered?"

Student: "Yes. But not in a second or two. I was looking for the solution to this problem.… But this guy! A completely new idea about the whole thing: when I don't have one, I am hoping I get one. Almost like an addiction. He said, 'I know it is confusing to you to be without a headache. I can give you one if you want one.'

"I just met someone who saw right through me. I was just as transparent as thin air. I felt some moments of frustration with him because he wouldn't do it the way I wanted him to do it. And I also feel like he knows me.

“He was giving me information that I needed. You know, that kind of presence in my life has incredible value. I mean, he just … he put me into a completely different frame of reference altogether. That whole experience touched me in a way that it is difficult to find the words to talk about it.

“I really feel like it got through the whole problem of what my headaches are all about. You know, more so than anything I have ever had before.

“It is like I am almost afraid that if I talk about it right now, I am going to lose the impact of the experience. I feel I just need to sit with it, because otherwise I am afraid I will talk myself out of what just happened.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

My intention on this journey was to find a teacher and ask him to heal my fear of separation.

To begin, I go to the top of a mountain in Baja California, Mexico. So I’m waiting for a lift from someone, but I space out. The next thing I know, an eagle swoops up at me and hits me in the stomach. I say, “Hey, what’s the big idea?”

And the eagle says, “I’ve been circling around, but you’ve been in dreamland and I had to get your attention.”

Then, this scene disappears and we’re in a boy’s bedroom in a suburban house. I’ve seen it in a movie called *The Boy Who Could Fly*. We look out the window and the bird says, “Let’s go.”

I say I don’t want to ride on him, and he tells me to become my bird, a white eagle with gold-tipped feathers. So I do this morphing thing and we fly up into the sky and pass through this blanket of white puffy clouds.

As I look out to the horizon, above the cloud layer, I see a long building with a tower in the center with a flag on it. My first reaction is it’s either a toy store or a school. As I fly to it, and in, I see it is a school. There are children running up and down the stairs. I fly towards the vice principal’s office and know my teacher’s not in there.

Then the children disappear and I am walking down an empty hallway and into a science lab. It is empty except for an old man with bushy hair in the corner. He turns around and I recognize him as Albert Einstein.

My mind says, “Yeah right,” but I ask anyway. “Are you my teacher?”

He says, “You don’t want me to be your teacher.”

I say, “Are you my teacher?”

He says, “I don’t look the way you want your teacher to look.”

I repeat, “Are you my teacher?”

And, finally, he says, “Yes, I am.” Then he adds, “You have a lot of teachers you are not willing to recognize.”

And I understood: teachers in the Middle World may not come in the form of teachers. They could be people we’re in conflict with, or strangers on the street.

Albert says, “It’s all relative” and laughs.[13]

WHY DON’T THE TEACHERS DESCEND TO HEAL IN OUR WORLD?

They do descend, when a shaman respectfully ascends to a teacher, makes a request, and with permission merges with the teacher and descends with it to heal a patient in the Middle World. This involves intense concentration by the shaman to maintain the merging with the spirit, especially when the two do their healing work together in the Middle World. Then the shaman, still merged, returns to the Upper World, thanks the teacher, and comes back to the familiar world.

Why does the teacher not stay in the Middle World permanently to heal and help? One of the reasons is because the shaman cannot long maintain the concentration necessary to continue the merging, or embodiment. There is much more to know regarding such matters, but this knowledge is best acquired experientially with advanced training and practice such as in the Foundation’s “Three-Year Program of Advanced Initiations in Shamanism and Shamanic Healing.”

11

Cosmic Dismemberment, Union, and Healing Power

> In my eye sockets are two emeralds. I am being healed. From the very base of my body. From the very base. From my bones. Where my third eye would be is a diamond, a cut diamond. The facets are sending out light. I am an amethyst skeleton with two emeralds as eye sockets and a cut diamond where my third eye is. That is what I am now. Right at this moment.
> —*from a Westerner's report*

A very famous kind of shamanic experience that has long perplexed many scholars and ethnographers is related in indigenous reports of the dismemberment of the shaman's body. Lurid accounts in the anthropological literature told of shamans who described how their bodies had been torn apart, chopped up and eaten, or otherwise dismembered, and then reassembled.[1] Details varied, but in the most commonly reported cases of dismemberment, the shamans found themselves being attacked and their bodies being destroyed down to the bones. These dramatic experiences were most famously reported for Siberian peoples but were also widely reported for the Inuit, the Aboriginal peoples of Australia, and other shamanic peoples.

Scholars and anthropologists generally seemed to have no explanation, although some suggested that the shamans were either lying or psychotic. For others, the dismemberment experiences were

just additional evidence of the barbaric and primitive nature of shamanism as a form of spirituality. My own experientially oriented investigations while practicing and teaching shamanism led me to quite different conclusions. A key to understanding how dismemberments happen to shamans is an awareness of the existence of two realities, for the shamans' dismemberment takes place in nonordinary reality. In NOR, shamans can experience dismemberment in any of the three worlds.

As I taught shamanism in workshops beginning in the mid-1970s, I found that students who had never heard of shamanic dismemberment were having spontaneous dismemberment experiences, sometimes even in their first journey to either the Lower or Upper World during introductory workshops. Their dismemberment experiences could occur unexpectedly at any time and were completely painless. Beyond that, the Westerners often reported deep ecstasy in these experiences. The "ecstasy" I speak of here is not just the theological term for an altered state of consciousness, but an ecstatic sense of merging with "everything" and oneness with the universe.

Also surprising was the similarity of their experiences with the accounts of indigenous shamans, such as those of Siberia. It became clear to me that we were documenting an experience not based on cultural expectations. For example, let us start with an anthropologically famous representative Siberian experience offered by A. A. Popov.

BEING CUT UP AND COOKED IN A CAULDRON: A SIBERIAN SAMOYED ACCOUNT

A Samoyed shaman was very ill and expected to die. Almost unconscious, he made a spontaneous journey to the Lower World, where he was led on by two spirit animal helpers, Mouse and Ermine. Following them, he "came to a desert and saw a distant mountain. After three days' travel he reached it…." Note that such journeys away from our world are "outside of time" and are not ordinary-reality days. The same is true for the mention of "three years," below.

> … [He] entered an opening and came upon a naked man working a bellows. On the fire was a cauldron "as big as the Earth." The naked man saw him and caught him with a huge pair of tongs. The novice [shaman] had time to think, "I am dead!" The man cut off his head, chopped his body into bits, and put everything into the cauldron. There he boiled the body for three years … [Later] the blacksmith fished the [Samoyed man's] bones out of a river in which they were floating, put them together, and covered them with flesh again.[2]

The blacksmith also changed the Samoyed's eyes so that he could see shamanically, and fixed his ears so that he could understand the language of plants.

All these events clearly took place in nonordinary reality during the journey. Westerners also may have the experience of being away days or even years.

BEING CUT UP, COOKED IN A CAULDRON, DEATH AND REBIRTH: A WESTERNER'S ACCOUNT

For comparison, now consider this account from a present-day Euro-American who had neither heard nor read of dismemberment experiences. His assigned mission was simply to journey to meet an unknown animal in the Lower World. (The contemporary Westerners' dismemberment experiences were similar in both the Upper and Lower Worlds; none were reported in the Middle World.) Following is the report of his spontaneous and unexpected experience.

To the sound of monotonous drumming, he went down through the hole at the bottom of a tree he knew in ordinary reality, then through a cave, and emerged into sunlight on the first level of the Lower World. There he met a fawn that led him to a grassy and forested knoll where there were other deer. Like shamans who in some cultures sing their journey experiences as they travel, as he journeyed he narrated his experiences into a tape recorder while he listened to

the drumming through earphones. His own words tell the rest.

I don't know what I should do—whether I should sit down, stand up, or walk, or … oh, the deer disappeared. It's like I stayed at the knoll, but you know, the sun went down. And it's dark now and there's a fire.

And now I'm just supposed to be with the animal but it is like there's something going on around the fire. It's like there is a pot or a cauldron boiling. The voices are calling to me to come closer. I'm supposed to look into the boiling pot. I don't know if I want to though.

I'm wondering where the deer is because that's all I was supposed to do is be with this animal. I don't know, I feel like it's around. Oh, I'm the deer. It's like I'm the animal now. I'm like the fawn and I'm real cautious about, you know, wanting to approach the fire and, you know, look into the bubbling cauldron.

Oh, dear! The scene has changed. Just like it went dark and I thought I was the deer and then I became me again. And the deer was separate.

Now it's like a village scene. It's like dusk, and it's like a tipi and there are people moving around. I guess I'm in the center of it but I don't think anyone sees me.

I can't tell where the deer is. Oh, like I'm the deer and everybody is jumping on me or something. And, ah, I'm the deer and they all cut me up and threw me into the pot. That's why I didn't—wow, umph—yes, that's why. I was the deer and I didn't want to walk in towards the pot. Because now I'm the deer and it's like no one told me, but I appeared there. And now it's like they all got me. They put knives in me and cut me up and butchered me and I'm cooking in the pot.

And now people are eating me. You know, it's like I'm cooked up in a stew. This is bizarre. I'm cooked up in a stew and it's like everyone is eating the deer, but I'm watching it from—I don't know where I'm watching it from. Oh, I see. It's like I'm above. I'm above them and I'm just like watching them. And I'm dead. And I'm in their stew pot cooking over the fire. And I'm watching them go about their lives. It's

almost like I didn't die. I mean, you know, I still feel like I'm alive or something, watching them, but I no longer have a body.

And I'm, um, going real deep now. I don't know what's going on. Just like I'm fading away. (Singing.) Ah! (Laughter.) Yeah, I died and went to where there were these singing voices and into the darkness but I see that there is more light.

It's like I can go on from here where I am dead, and (laughs) I can come back again. (Intense breathing) … Wow![3]

In the above experience, this Western journeyer not only was cut up and cooked in a cauldron, as happened to the Samoyed shaman, but first he had the experience of merging with the deer, separating from the deer, and then being one with the animal while being butchered. Then he saw the scene in an out-of-body type of experience similar to that reported by near-death experience survivors. Thus he learned that he still had existence even though he no longer had a body, an important teaching. As a bystander, he saw his flesh (the same as the deer's) being eaten—much like reports of Inuit shamans viewing their own bones as onlookers. He also heard singing voices.

He received these revelations in a profound shamanic state of consciousness, as indicated by his deep, intense breathing. He also learned, as have shamans long before him, "I can go on from here where I am dead and [laughs] I can come back again."

Death will never again hold the same meaning for him. His laughter is symptomatic of the joy and deep ecstasy resulting from a dismemberment and resurrection experience.

"INITIATION" AND DISMEMBERMENT

The vivid and incredible nature of dismemberment experiences has caused some Western scholars to focus upon them as *the* rite of passage or "the initiation" of the shaman. While the experiences can be legitimately viewed as initiations, this does not mean that persons who have passed through them are immediately shamans. Normally many months, probably years, of successful healing and helping

others using shamanic methods would be necessary for a person to be called a shaman. The ability of that person to produce miracles of healing through shamanic work is usually the real criterion, and the decision to give someone that name is made by others who have witnessed the miracles.

Initiation by the spirits is really a never-ending process when one is doing serious shamanism. Frequently the best shamans and shamanic practitioners are those who have had the longest practice and experience, often including repeated dismemberments.

Among Siberian shamans I have known, there is almost a competition to let others know how many dismemberments they have experienced. Perhaps this is because dismemberments are profound teachings as well as healings that transform shamanic journeyers at a deep spiritual level. The following example of a journey by a Euro-American woman illustrates this point.

A WESTERNER'S DISMEMBERMENT AND REBIRTH WITH A HEALING AND NEW BODY

This woman, Nicolina Halvorson (hereafter "NH"), on a mission to her teacher in the Upper World, had never heard nor read of the dismemberment experience. To her astonishment, she was both dismembered and reconstituted with new body parts after asking the teacher for advice on achieving optimum health.

This is her simultaneous narration of what happened as she journeyed, listening with earphones to a drumming tape and recording out loud what she was experiencing in this ascension to the Upper World. NH starts her ascension.

I am floating slowly upward from the plateau. I am beginning to pass through a cloud, floating up. It is a gray cumulus cloud. I am still floating up. I am going through something else: a clear sheet of haze.

Now I am standing on a plain. The ground is a hazy yellow. A sort of ghost horse with an Indian on it is approaching. He turns back toward some hazy mountains. There are two other horses with Indians on them. They seem quite ethereal and ghostlike.

Now I am turning toward another direction. I see a very beautiful

Indian princesslike goddess. She has on a buckskin dress with glass beading across the chest. The design is a purple flower with yellow leaves. There is an edge of black beads around them. The tail of an animal is hanging from her waist, an ermine tail hanging down from a belt around her hips. She has on moccasins with beads, like those that were on her chest.

I see her face more clearly now. She is tall, slender, and she has high cheek bones. She is wearing a beaded headband. On each side of the headband is something of an animal nature hanging right by her temples. She is smiling.

"Are you my teacher?"

She is my teacher.

"I have a question. Could you please answer it? How can I have optimum health?"

She reaches out her hands toward my hands. She has her hands on the tops of mine. Her skin is quite soft and warm. I feel an electrical sensation flowing from her hands up my arms as far as my elbows. It is sort of infiltrating past my elbows with green light, reaching my shoulders. Purple, like neon light, is swirling at each of my shoulders.

Our hands have become one. We are merged at the hands. I am starting to take on energy that is flowing from her body. A ray of red neon-type light is shooting from the purple light on my shoulders into my chest area.

The teacher takes her hands and NH feels "an electrical sensation" flowing into her. This is one of the ways that spiritual power feels, like a kind of energy, as it is passed on to a shaman or from a shaman to a patient. Indeed, the journeyer immediately recognizes that she is "taking on energy."

The power or energy manifests as green and purple light that sends red light into her chest. Then a white light floats out of her chest (below). Similarly, Amazonian Shuar shamans see a person's power manifesting as light in rainbow colors in the chest and, in the case of particularly powerful persons, sometimes as a white light in the chest.[4]

NH is undergoing spiritual death and rebirth. As Eliade has observed: "All experiences of the supernatural light present this common denominator: anyone receiving such an experience undergoes a change in being … a meeting with the light indicates a spiritual rebirth."[5] NH continues:

A white light is floating out of my chest. It is exploding, making fireworks, like sky rockets, up into the air and coming down on each side of me. Now a stream of white light is going from my heart to her heart. We are connected at our hearts. The stream of white light is becoming quite large. Our whole chests are connected with white light.

The white light floating out of the journeyer's chest demonstrates that it is a form of power by exploding. In a similar way, the Shuar in an altered state of consciousness may see a light-emanating power vision *(arutam)* explode in darkness at a sacred waterfall.[6]

The white light then goes out from her heart. The radiation of light from one's body is known to the Iglulik Eskimo as "lighting" or "enlightenment" and is part of shamanic initiation.[7] An Iglulik shaman described it as follows:

> I had gained my *gaumang*, my enlightenment, the shaman-light of brain and body, and this in such a manner that it was not only I who could see through the darkness of life, but the same light also shone out from me, imperceptible to human beings, but visible to all the spirits of earth and sky and sea, and these now came to me and became my helping spirits.[8]

The light going out from NH's heart, described above, connects with the heart of her tutelary spirit or teacher. She merges with the spirit teacher and becomes one with her. This "merging with the teacher" is another classic step in shamanic experience, for example in Siberian tribes and among the Tamang of Nepal, as described by Larry Peters, where the shamans connect with their spirit teachers in

the Upper World and in white light become one with them.[9] NH goes on:

Now the connection is beginning to happen between our foreheads. It is yellow light now becoming a solid golden yellow rod. It is light that has become solidified between her forehead and mine. We are becoming one. A green light is circling my waist and becoming a figure eight connecting her waist with mine and flowing between our waists.

Her hands aren't lying on top of mine anymore. We are joined at the fingers now. We have one set of fingers that go from my hand to her hand. There are no fingernails. We are joined at the fingertips. There is a band of purple light around our pelvic areas. Our legs are merging at the knees with a pink light. Our toes have become one.

There is a golden light surrounding us. We are becoming one. We are merging into one body. We are one. We are spinning. We are one ball. Spinning. Spinning over a landscape like a golden tumbleweed. There are sparks of light pouring off us. We are a whirlwind of light. We are spinning light. We are one spinning light. Golden light. Thrashing, sparking. We are pure electricity now.

Yellow light becomes a golden rod connecting her forehead to that of her teacher. The forehead among the Australian aboriginal shamans is the location of the "strong eye" that permits one to see shamanically.[10] The merging with her teacher continues, while a "figure eight" connects them (the infinity symbol is commonly experienced spontaneously in Westerners' journeys). Then they become one, pure energy or power. NH reports:

We have collided with something. We rolled into a stone, something like a big granite block, and have split into two halves. I am a piece of solid gold. I am in gold rock form. She is also in gold rock form. I am a piece of solid rock. I am gold. I am in the form of gold. My human form is not here.

It feels a bit scary wondering if I will get my human form back again, because being in gold is like being paralyzed.

A hand is coming out of that other half of the piece of gold. She is reaching out to me. I have an arm coming out of the gold, too. Once again we are holding hands. It is my right hand in her left hand. She is stepping out of her half of the golden ball. I see her again.

She is trying to pull me out. I am not coming out very easily. Just my arms are out. I am a skeleton. I am a skeleton of purple glowing light. My skeleton is made of amethyst. That is all there is of me.

NH becomes a skeleton, first of light and then of amethyst, a kind of quartz crystal. "That is all there is of me," she says. Becoming a skeleton is one of the most famous and widespread shamanic initiatory experiences, being described in detail by peoples in Siberia, as well as among the Eskimo and in Australia. NH continues:

In my eye sockets are two emeralds. I am being healed. From the very base of my body. From the very base. From my bones. Where my third eye would be is a diamond, a cut diamond. The facets are sending out light. I am an amethyst skeleton with two emeralds as eye sockets and a cut diamond where my third eye is. That is what I am now. Right at this moment.

She receives emerald and diamond crystals in her head, another common cross-cultural initiatory experience of receiving power. Similarly, among the South American Cobeuo Indians, a shaman "introduces rock crystals into the novice's head; these … then take the place of these organs and become his 'strength.' "[11]

It is well known in many shamanic cultures that crystal (usually quartz) power helps the shaman to see.[12] For example, among the Wiradjeri of Australia, quartz crystals were put into water to be drunk in order for one to be able to "see ghosts" (or spirits).[13] When the Australian aboriginal journeyed to the Upper World, sometimes the spirit teacher Baiame "sang" a quartz crystal into the forehead of the journeyer "so that he would be able to see right into things."[14] NH goes on:

My teacher now looks like she was when I first saw her. But I look

like something from outer space. I don't have any flesh. Liquid is pouring down on me. Something like liquid gold is pouring down on top of my skeleton. It is turning into veins and arteries. I see my heart. My heart is gold. I am getting veins now and they are liquid gold. And my heart is gold.

Then liquid gold flows into her, becoming her arteries, veins, and heart. This echoes reported shamanic journey experiences among the Yakut of Siberia, where a future shaman, after being reduced to a skeleton, is given new blood.[15] NH continues:

I am an amethyst skeleton with emerald eyes, a cut diamond in my forehead, and now I have a golden heart with arteries and veins of gold. There is a liver being formed for me somewhere. It is made of—it looks like ruby. It is like a liquid ruby. I see hands putting it into the place where my liver would be.

There it is. Now there are hands bringing other organs to me. It is happening so quickly I can't see what each organ is. There is my spleen now—it is like liquid sapphire.

I think I am being made of stones. It is strange. These stones are spirit helpers for my body. These stones are healing me. My body is being healed.

She receives new bodily organs in the form of healing stones—in other words, stones of power. This parallels the shamanic initiation of the Unmatjera tribe of Australia, in which *atnonqara* stones are placed in the initiate's body in connection with providing him a new set of internal organs.[16] A similar initiatory experience is reported for the Binbinga tribe.[17] NH continues:

Flesh is coming in. It is flesh. It is new flesh. I have muscles now too. They are strong. They are strong new muscles. The flesh is new. The hair is new. The teeth are new. I am being healed at a cellular level. By precious stones.

I still don't recognize myself. I almost feel like I have wings, like I am an angel. I feel like I have died.

The process of receiving new flesh is typically reported in the dismemberments of tribal shamans. The healing is completed by giving this journeyer an entirely new body. This is generally considered by scholars to represent death and then the rebirth of the person as a shaman. Indeed, she says, “I have died.” This is similar to the earlier statement by the Westerner who felt he had died and then returned. NH goes on:

I am an angel. I have wings. They are golden wings. I have a white robe on. And I have a golden light coming out of my head.

This, too, echoes the experiences of shamans in other cultures. For example, again among the Wiradjeri of Australia, the journeyer grows wings after receiving quartz crystal water in the Upper World from Baiame.[18]

“The growing of wings,” as Eliade notes, “as a result of mystical initiation is a well-known motif, found also in the higher religions. Thus, for instance, the Taoists believe that when a man obtains the tao, feathers begin to grow on his body.”[19] NH continues:

My teacher is touching me with her hands. I am returning to my human form again. I kneel. She says, “You have a new body. You will know how to take care of it.”

My health has been restored. I have been healed by the stones. [She sings.] A golden rod of lights is coming in through my head and coming out of each leg at my toes. It is making a humming sound.

The understanding of how to take care of her new body presumably is a result of the power and knowledge she has received. The journeyer states, “My health has been restored.” She sings, in a state of deep ecstasy, aware that she has a new body free of illness.

Dismemberment and reconstitution, as those of us who have experienced it know, is a healing in which the journeyer receives a new spiritual body, free of illness and pain, with positive consequences for one’s health in ordinary reality. NH goes on:

I am lying down now. My teacher is sitting beside me. I see green people at my feet. I don't know if they are real or if they are Egyptian mummies. They don't look human. The middle one seems human. I think she has a message for me. She is handing me something on a tray. It is a ball, a glass ball.

She says, "It is filled with light and energy. It is all the energy that you will need."

"Thank you. Thank you."

It is a gift. It is a gift from a very ancient being. It is such an important gift. It took three people to give it to me—one to hold the energy and the two others to somehow help and protect it. It is a very beautiful, wonderful gift. I am very grateful.

I don't know what to say. "Thank You."

This was a gift of power. She was given the gift of a glass ball "filled with light and energy." That she calls it "glass" rather than "crystal" represents the fact that she is seeing something of which she does not yet have full knowledge, for the crystal ball, ground down into a sphere from a large quartz crystal, is a direct descendant of the shaman's quartz crystal representing light and power—the quartz crystal often being used by tribal shamans as a power object par excellence, such as among shamans of the Upper Amazon and Aboriginal Australia.[20] NH continues:

"Thank you" doesn't seem like it could ever be enough. There is a purple light coming out of my shoulder, like rods of light.

I am being called back now by the drum. My teacher is sitting me up. We embrace. I thank her.

I am walking back. She is behind me but I don't know if she is coming with me. I am floating down. I am floating down. Rose petals are floating down, too. I am now back, sitting on the plateau.

This was an emotion-filled journey. Afterward, NH had this to say:

> I asked how I could have optimum health, and I was changed, energized, turned into pure energy, and then into metal. I felt I

was really metal. Then I was built up again from the skeleton, and helped by the mineral kingdom and stones. I was recreated and then given all the energy I needed. And I was told that I would know how to take care of myself. Being changed into so many different things has left me a little stunned. I feel like my question is answered, more than I thought it would be answered.

At times it was scary. Just being in such a different form than I am used to. A part of me was afraid, when I was the metal and then the skeleton, that I wouldn't get the rest of the body back. Also when I was the angel I didn't know if I would get my body back again. A lot of the time I was frightened about what was happening to me—all of the energy changes. I think it might take me a little while to sort of absorb it all and incorporate it. [My teacher] didn't tell me that I was going to be healed or recreated. She didn't tell me anything. I didn't know anything. It just started happening. So I got slightly blown away.

I guess I felt I died. When I first came back I felt frightened because I wondered, do I still know my children? Do I still know anybody that I knew? But I am sure that as time goes by I will. In fact, I probably know everybody still. But I feel like I am new. I was re-created, but instead of turning back into me, I turned into an angel first. I finally got a body back, but it was an angel. I knew I wasn't back. Then my teacher touched my cheek, and I turned back into me. She was helping to bring me back. I was told that now I had the new body, and that I would know how to take care of it. It was like I was given a second chance.[21]

"A second chance," of course, is another way of saying that a new beginning to her life had commenced, or that she had undergone an initiatory experience. She had been built up from the skeleton: reerected, resurrected, remembered—any and all of these words could

apply.

An important reason that dismemberment–rememberment is often recognized by shamans as a critical, even initiatory, occurrence is that it not only resurrects one with new power, but it can also radically expand the shaman's perspective about reality. Through the experience, the shamanic journeyers temporarily have much of their ordinary-reality personal history erased, an important part of "remembering" their unity with nonordinary reality.

For comparison, let us consider the case of a man named Ilpailurkna of the Australian Unmatjera tribe. Like the Western woman whose experience has just been described, he underwent a dismemberment and reconstitution involving the use of stones in the replacement of his internal organs. When he came out of this altered state of consciousness, he had no idea where he was.

> Ilpailurkna had completely forgotten who he was and all about his past life. After a time the old man [his ordinary-reality mentor] led him back to his camp and showed it to him, and told him that the woman there was his *lubra*, for he had forgotten all about her. His coming back this way and his strange behaviour at once showed the other natives that he had been made into a medicine man.[22]

Although our Western journeyer, NH, had not even heard of shamanic dismemberment prior to her own experience, note what she said upon her return: "I felt frightened because I wondered, do I still know my children? Do I still know anybody that I knew?" Her remarks strikingly echo the account of Ilpailurkna's experience. While she feared she would not know anyone upon returning from her journey, she subsequently found this fear groundless. Yet these two examples, Western and Aboriginal Australian, illustrate how the dismemberment experience is much more than the simple replacement of body parts, for the "remembering" of organs, including the brain and the heart, is also an awakening from ego-centered preoccupations with one's own personal history in ordinary

reality and remembering or reconnecting with a very ancient and sacred memory.

DISMEMBERING, REMEMBERING, AND UNION

What is this remembering? It is one memory and yet many. It is the Dreamtime. It is the mythic reality. It is the reality where there is no time. It is the memory of the union with the universe that existed before we were each individualized through conception and birth into this ordinary reality. It is the memory of the cosmic consciousness from which we came and to which we will return. Besides receiving new power, an important unexpected gift from dismemberment–rememberment is the gift of experiencing, however briefly, dismembering our ordinary-reality consciousness and experiencing rememberment not just of the body but of the mind, remembering our union with the infinite, the ineffable, the total universe.

This remembering, because it is union, does not have particular defining characteristics and thus is almost impossible to describe. Even the classic stories of sacred union in the histories of the major religions cannot convey adequately those experiences of deep ecstatic union, for they are ineffable experiences, beyond the confines of language.

One should therefore not be surprised that ethnographers and other Western observers rarely elicited information on such experiences from shamans. Indeed, there seems to be little evidence that most Western fieldworkers were even looking for the possibility of such ineffable experiences among “primitive” peoples. A rare exception or two can be found in the writings of the great part-Eskimo (and possibly shaman) ethnographer Knud Rasmussen, as mentioned earlier.[23]

As a virtually indescribable experience, the deep ecstasy often accompanying dismemberment was rarely communicated to researchers and documented for shamans in the ethnographic literature. In contrast, the readily describable details of the recounted dismemberments were easily noted and did find their way into

Western ethnographic reports.

As a consequence, it is understandable that many Western scholars have prematurely assumed that tribal shamans were limited to "gross" experiences and were less "evolved" in their spiritual work than practitioners of the Eastern and Western civilizations' spiritual disciplines.

Not surprisingly, even Western journeyers, when asked to convey the emotional experiences they had upon dismemberment, have difficulty describing them. For example, one said: "I think it's what we call love.... There doesn't seem to be any separate intelligence there, separateness there.... It's one tremendously vast presence which just is. [crying, sobbing] It feels like nothing, but it's everything. I keep describing it, but I don't have any words for it."[24]

ANOTHER KIND OF DISMEMBERMENT: INTENTIONAL

Particularly in the early years of my teaching, dismemberments happened spontaneously when students were ascending to the Upper World or descending to the Lower, and without my having mentioned the possibility to them beforehand. Eventually, since the students expressed enthusiasm about their unexpected and profound dismemberment experiences in the Upper and Lower Worlds, I decided to see if advanced students could achieve them voluntarily. The results were very successful, and I include below a few examples of their accounts.

The intentional ascension or journey for dismemberment should be prefaced by significant advanced training in shamanism, for it is an important initiation, and it should not be practiced just on the basis of reading this book. Shamanic ascensions or other journeys for intentional dismemberment as recounted here are part of a careful sequence of initiations that I strategically planned for students considered ready for this next phase.

It should be reiterated that this exercise, to ascend intentionally to the Upper World to be dismembered, and to return, did not come from the literature on comparative religions but directly from the

experiential approach of core shamanism. Now, in retrospect, I can say that this straightforward core exercise from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies somewhat resembles the most advanced *chöd* practice of Tibetan lamas, although I am not clear if some go out of the Middle World to do it. In chöd, the purposes and ritual methods are complex and complicated by local spiritual and religious elaborations, with one approach used by the village shamans and another used by the lamas.

For Tamang village shamans in Nepal, who are linguistically and culturally Tibetan, the chöd dismemberment is part of a method of helping to heal a community and is done in the Middle World. Specifically, in the shamans' chöd ritual the intention is for the shamans to gather into their own bodies pollution from localities in their communities, and then invite the local ghosts, who cause illness by eating the living members of the community, to come and feed on the shamans instead and absorb the pollution. They thereby satisfy the ghosts' hunger and, at the same time, accomplish the consumption of the pollution in the community through their consuming the shamans in this special form of dismemberment. A sacred union with a spirit, with hints of a possible infinite union, often occurred for the shamans consequent to dismemberment.[25]

For Tibetan lamas, the advanced form of chöd dismemberment is used as a secret method specifically to obtain sacred union, according to W. Y. Evans-Wentz.[26] Lamas pursuing dismemberment are taught as initiates to have the intention of seeking union involving loss of ego, presumably in infinite union, so it is difficult on that evidence alone to assert that their subsequent experiences were independent of their prior programming.

This is one of the ways in which their dismemberment exercises were apparently somewhat different from those that I originated for the Foundation, for the possibility of an infinite union outcome was rarely offered to students until after my first years of teaching. The dismemberment journey exercise that I eventually devised was in keeping with the principles and practices of core shamanism, unencumbered by cultural traditions and expectations. It provided

minimal methodological instruction, so that students could independently discover its consequences.

Following are a few reports of ascensions made with the intention to seek dismemberment.

EXPERIENCING THE WHOLE UNIVERSE

I asked my loving and compassionate spirit helpers to take me to the Upper World to be dismembered.

I went through a tunnel to the Upper World and I ended up being thrown into the sun—it was like a slow burning in which layer after layer of my body was melted, disappearing into the sun as ashes, then as fine particles. The particles wanted to be united with the others and were allowed to do so. Then I entered into a dream state, and as soon as I started dreaming, the whole dream and me were again thrown into the sun, and again the slow burning began. My dream and I were converted into ashes and particles; then I entered a dream state, and again as soon as I started to dream, the whole dream and I were thrown again into the sun. The same cycle happened several times.

When the call-back came, I was in my entirety filled in by space (like the space from outer space). It was as if my body was a shell containing the universe inside. I was completely hollow, empty (no body with organs and bones) yet filled with the whole universe. I felt as if I was a shell with a window through which I could see and experience the whole universe.

After the dismemberment, while being outside, I had the impression that all the plants in the garden were the same as me, shells holding the whole universe inside them. It was beautiful.[27]

"THE WHOLE UNIVERSE WAS CONTAINED INSIDE MY BODY"

… the Four who had done the dismemberment (Elephant, Merlin, Old Monk, and The Silver One) took what appeared to be a thin, transparent, gossamer remnant of myself and began stretching it out in each of the Four Directions. They stretched and stretched, moving ever outward from the center, out from the Earth, past the sun and

planets, the stars and galaxies, to the outer reaches of the Universe itself. When they reached the outer limits, this gossamer thread (like a super-thin spiderweb) suddenly became the outer limits of the universe. At the same time I just as suddenly became me, like an instant rememberment, but now the whole universe was contained inside my body. I had just a brief time to experience this new form of Oneness with the universe before the call-back.

It was quite an experience to have the whole universe contained inside my body, to have stars and galaxies, mice and snakes, insects and birds, trees and flowers, mountains and rivers—things that I normally experience as separate entities—now be a part of me in a most intimate way.[28]

THE UNIVERSAL LIFE FORCE—WE ARE ONE

As I started this journey I repeated my intention over and over and asked the compassionate spirits to dismember me. I traveled into the Upper World and quickly to Celeste, my planet teacher, and I circled round and round inside her sphere many times and then outside on her ring. And then I circled around the atmosphere of Earth and I could see all the beautiful living things; then I was taken up, up, up into the distances of outer space … past stars and galaxies and light energies. My body as it was then got very cold and all components—every bit, at the cellular level—became a frozen, solid mass … a big ice cube in outer space. That was the beginning of the destruction, the dismemberment, all cellular connections frozen solid. Then in the distance a ball of intense heat and light, a supernova, raced toward me; and as it neared (but was still very far away) I began to melt slowly—drip, drip, drip—melting into the universe like a Salvador Dalí painting. And then, as the supernova got closer, the intense heat in a flash melted the entirety of me, and "I" as "I" was … was gone … melted into the universe … little droplets (bits) of melted being … dispersed among the vast spaces of the universe. I was one with the celestial beings and nature of the Upper World. I spent a long time merging with that energy and rhythm, and the spirits told me to just drink it in. They showed me different light energies—

purple and yellow—and they took me to the Earth to merge with various animals and plants and waters. I asked them if there were certain parts of me that needed changing … and they said: no, not specific parts, just a total energy shift … toward "heart" and "light."

In the outer reaches of the universe they reassembled me … and I could physically feel my musculature form from head to toe … coming back together as a unit again—with incredible strength and peace. And I existed in that form in the universe for a while (and I thought that I was all put back together). I lay there as various things happened. Stardust showered on my body and was absorbed through my skin … light energies came by again (purple and yellow) … and I just merged with it all.

Then, all of a sudden, there was a pounding in my chest which was very real and very physical. They said they were giving me the heartbeat of the universe—and that I would no longer be separate in that sense (from the universe). The lesson for me was to lose that sense of individuation. The heartbeat they were giving me was/is the heartbeat of the universe, and now the heartbeat (mine and the universe's) are one and the same. Now, within my body, there would always be this connection (direct link) to the universal life force—we are one.

This heartbeat gives me life in this form—in this reality of individuation—but I am never to forget that the heartbeat inside this body of mine is the heartbeat of the universe. It connects me to all things. It is a direct link to the spirit world. I am never to forget, hide from, or disallow this connection. It resides in me in a very present way now through this pounding in my chest (although it was always there); it is a re-awakening … a re-remembering (!) … a true gift from the spirits. Body-soul-spirit are now consciously connected—never to be forgotten. It has been experienced.

I came back down to Earth on the supernova and tumbled down through the atmosphere and to my tree and landed in my nest—to be held there.[29]

THE COMPASSION OF THE UNIVERSE AS AN IRRESISTIBLE FORCE

I had barely stated my intention to ask for a dismemberment when Eagle snapped me up in her claws. She flew me up to her nest, pulled my flesh apart, ate me, and regurgitated me into the mouths of her chicks. I was digested by the chicks and became parts of their cells as they grew and fledged. I became their scat on rocks. As it rained, I became liquid and was consumed by the Earth into her soil. I traveled up the hair roots of trees. Up, up the trunks, into the branches and into the leaves. I evaporated into the sky. As moisture I became clouds. I was blown by the wind, got very full and burst into rain. The rain became streams, rivers, and a large lake with boats floating on it.

I am the water. I am the wake behind the boat, moving furiously, flying through the air. I spill over a dam and into a river again. I move forward and become water in the water-treatment plants to supply water to humans. I come out of the tap and into a glass. I am consumed by a human. I move throughout the body and am expelled as urine. I merge with other water and am flushed away, on to another treatment plant and into the ocean. I am ocean spray from waves, carried into the air. I am one tiny molecule. I travel up to become the ice crystals of a jet stream. I am floating, melting, moving upward, out past our galaxy limits. I float in the quiet.

I see a large imploding nebula and am taken in by its power. I am spit back out as millions of myself floating in the universe. I regather into a tiny drop and Eagle appears and takes this in her beak and flies me to the sun. I become steam. Eagle gathers all of my particles with a sweeping motion of her wings, and I am formed into a multifaceted crystal. She carries me back to her nest. An image of the human me, looking like a deflated, plastic blow-up doll, is lying on the ground beneath the nest. She picks up the crystal me and flies down and places it in the area of my solar plexus in the flat me. As she places the crystal, I inflate and become my human form again. The crystal is now inside me.

Eagle says, “You have been one with the universe and now the universe is within you.” I thank Eagle for this beautiful gift and journey.

I hear the call-back and reluctantly come back to OR.[30]

SEEKING COSMIC UNION WITHOUT DISMEMBERMENT

The following two Westerners were invited to seek cosmic union while in the Upper World. Dismemberment was not mentioned to them. One succeeded in achieving various experiences of union. The other achieved what appears to be cosmic union after an unexpected dismemberment late in the ascension.

AN IRRESISTIBLE FORCE

I find the mere idea of this journey absolutely amazing. I returned with the most astounding experiences, and the fewest words to describe them with. I can describe the narrative content of the journey, but could not ever describe the effect it had on me.

As I began to journey outward, I saw two endangered species of animals that I care very much about—the polar bear and the snow leopard. I realized I will never really lose them because I can journey to their spirits. Then I realized that I am one with them; then I realized that I am them. Next, I saw a friend of mine, who is in a period of deep depression. I realized that part of the reason why I care so much is that here, as I approach cosmic union, I am she.

After the above encounters, which seemed relatively close to home, I journeyed very far out. I saw a very gold place in the sky like the light from a gold sunset, surrounded by dark clouds. I entered there and was surrounded by the gold light, and reached what seemed like the end of the cosmos, though to me, that is a contradiction of terms. Here there was pure compassion. I was surrounded and permeated by it. I felt overwhelmed by how much I cared about everything. I experienced the compassion of the universe as an irresistible force that must constantly find expression.

I feel that my human existence as a shamanic practitioner can best be described as a great bottleneck, through which only the tiniest, subatomic particle of what is really “out there” can be expressed.[31]

IT WAS NOTHING AND EVERYTHING ALL TOGETHER

In the following case, this person had not yet reached the Upper World (she was still in the astronomer’s universe), and then she dove

into the wormhole of a galaxy in that universe.

I left from the designated starting point and moved on out and out and out past the sky and the stars and other planets and other times and other places. At one point I nearly passed a wormhole in some galaxy or other. I had traveled far and had seen civilizations and planets and colors and beings, all described in other journeys, so I won't repeat them here.

When I went past that wormhole, I knew this was the place and I turned back and dove through. At this moment, I didn't know which end was up or which way was forward or backward. I felt much like Alice must have felt when she went through the looking glass.

I went down and down and down. I went through things that were big and complex like planets and galaxies that had been sucked into this vortex a long time ago. I went into them and into the things that were in them.

I went into planets and saw that they were made of many things. There was not just earthlike material and rocks and water, but there were gases and minerals and things I had never imagined living in there. There were beings both large and small. I found a lot of smaller beings, I don't want to call them bugs, but they seemed to have their own sort of civilization. They had their own set of rules. The message I got was that this was the only place they could live and so here they were.

I went down further into some of the components I found, and there were other civilizations made of beings even tinier than the ones that had previously amazed me. They lived here too. Some lived in fires that burned here and they were quite happy to do so. Others lived in places I found that were as cold as ice.

I found more substances and went on into them. I cannot call them molecules or atoms or pi mesons or anything else. Those are not the words that would be used here. Our words in our world don't mean a thing in this place.

These components were small, and as I traveled through, I found more and more civilizations, increasingly smaller than the previous. I

think I must have reached some sort of critical mass at one point because I was suddenly surrounded by giant beings, and their world was very odd. It was light in places and very dark in others.

I kept going down, diving into whatever material I found, and heading to where I thought the center might be. My feeling was that it had to be somewhere down this wormhole. This was a vortex that would suck everything in the universe into it, and so I should be able to come to the end at some point.

I started to feel odd now. It was as if I was leaving myself because I was too big or something.

I began to deconstruct and bits of me joined into the vortex as it swept through what we would call time and space, but what I realized now was not time and it was not space. Those things no longer existed for me. I just was. I was just here and this was cosmic union and it was turbulent and peaceful all together. It was colorful and colorless all together. It was nothing and everything all together and I was happy to be here.

But I knew I had to return because I do have a mission to achieve in my life and I had to get back to it. I moved on back through the vortex and [came back].[32]

HEALING POWER

What the spirits have in mind for us in our ascensions and other journeys goes far beyond any personally planned goals, for they provide us with gifts according to our needs, not our expectations. Cosmic union is one such gift, a gift that fuses the journeyer with the awesome power of the universe. In this way, shamans become more than themselves, for now they can be midwives to miracles, miracles of helping and healing others.

The cosmic dismemberments in the Upper World are different from those in the Middle World, with an example of the latter provided by the Tibetan Tamang tribal shamans. The dismemberments of our Westerners involved no “hungry ghosts,” because when we are fully beyond our Middle World, we do not find hunger nor pain, having

left the “suffering beings,” the “ghosts,” behind. The merging in the Upper World was not with suffering beings of the Middle World, but with the entire universe: cosmic union.

Concluding with cosmic union, it is now possible to say that the quest for healing power, with which our book started, has almost ended. The next step, if one chooses, is to accept that immense cosmic power through the modulating powers of the compassionate spirits, and to undertake the classic healing work of the shaman to help those who are suffering or in pain.

As Essie Parrish, the great California Pomo Indian shaman, said:

“Be careful on the journey,” they said, “the journey to heaven,” they warned me. And so I went.… Then when I entered into the place, I knew: if you enter heaven you might have to work.[33]

12

Spirits, Heavens, and Spiritual Freedom

We have gone from seeking spirit power in a cave to experiencing cosmic empowerment engendered by dismemberment. In between there was much more that happened to the Westerners whose accounts became part of the Celestia Study of experiences in nonordinary reality. Unfortunately there is not enough space here to describe more. Now that we are at the final chapter, let us take the opportunity to focus on some important subjects that deserve additional attention.

SPIRITS AND SCIENCE

The quite common human view that spirits, such as human souls, are real is unacceptable to today's science, as it has been for several centuries. Although one spirit, God, may be occasionally mentioned (as by Einstein), multiple "spirits" or "souls" are anathema and unacceptable in the scientific paradigm. In other words, Western science is founded upon a belief—the belief that spirits cannot exist.

This attitude has its historical origins in the attacks by the Church on such pioneering scientists as Galileo and Copernicus during the Renaissance and Reformation. In reaction, during the Age of "Enlightenment," Western science and medicine decreed that souls and spirits did not exist and were therefore not relevant to scientific study and medical practice.

While this position is quite understandable historically, its

perpetuation today limits the parameters of science by decreeing a priori that certain phenomena cannot exist. I am not alone in this view. As my colleague Paul Uccusic pointed out to me, the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant once said about spirits: "There cannot be found any reason a priori [Kant's italicization] to deny their existence."[1]

Even today science has yet to disprove the theory of the existence of spirits. And disproof of a theory, or falsification, is a cornerstone of scientific method, as noted by Karl Popper.[2] As long as the theory of the existence of spirits is not falsified, it cannot logically be ignored by science. In other words, the position of science that spirits do not exist has quite unscientifically been a matter of faith, ironically resembling religious dogma.

A notable exception in the scientific community was the great natural scientist Alfred Russel Wallace, the simultaneous originator with Charles Darwin of the theory of natural selection. In the years subsequent to Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, Wallace made a painstaking investigation of the reality of spirits that culminated in his 1874 book, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*.[3]

Despite Wallace's careful research, his book received a generally hostile reception. In 1896, responding to his critics in a later edition, he stated:

> That theory is the most scientific which best explains the whole series of phenomena; and I therefore claim that the spirit-hypothesis is the most scientific, since even those who oppose it most strenuously often admit that it does explain all the facts, which cannot be said for any other hypothesis.[4]

Unlike the Westerners who were hostile to Wallace's book, indigenous shamans had long since reached conclusions similar to his. Conducting countless healing experiments with their patients, often in life-and-death situations, their results consistently supported his conclusions, or, better said, his supported theirs. This they did over many millennia in thousands of different cultures and independently

on five different continents. Not surprisingly, the fundamentals of indigenous shamanic practice are remarkably consistent throughout the world and provide the basis for core shamanism.

As Wallace indicated, such phenomena can best be explained according to the scientific principle of parsimony, and that parsimonious explanation is simply that the spirits are real. This is not to suggest that one should avoid seeking nonspiritual explanations of shamanic phenomena.

Among the most famous of the "impossible" phenomena are, of course, the accounts of near-death experiences (NDEs). Apparently for science they remain inexplicable. A specialist in NDEs summed up the situation this way: "What thirty years of scholarly inquiry has not yet revealed is why NDEs occur."[5]

Similarly, when I asked Charles Tart—an outstanding pioneer in rigorous scientific approaches to the field of parapsychology—what mechanism makes mental telepathy work, he said: "I don't have the slightest idea, and I don't think anybody else does either."[6] He later added, "Scientific attempts to explain NDEs and the phenomena of parapsychology have 'hit a brick wall,' partly because of the many psychological complexities in this area, and perhaps partly because the reality of spirits has been denied a priori."[7]

So the brick wall may be giving way, and Charles Tart is now considering the possibility of spirits having an effect in his experiments. He said, "I'm certainly open to the fact that there is a spirit world of some sort and, so sometimes, maybe many times, I have some 'co-experimenters' and I don't know what they have in mind for that experiment."[8]

Of course, Alfred Russel Wallace proposed that the reality of spirits provides an explanation for a variety of otherwise inexplicable phenomena that others have relegated to the acausal categories of "coincidence" or "synchronicity."[9]

Wallace's proposal is not surprising, since the principle of the reality of spirits has been tested and supported cross-culturally by shamans for thousands of years. Once one understands that spirits exist, much that appears impossible to outsiders is really quite

understandable and even may be subject to replication. The phenomenon that follows is one such example.

THE MIRACLE OF THE UNBOUND SHAMAN: AN INVITATION TO SCIENCE

One of the most famous mysteries in shamanism has been observed by visitors to the Arctic regions of Siberia, North America, and Greenland, as well as in the western plains and subarctic areas of indigenous North America: in public séances, tightly bound shamans are spontaneously freed of their bindings without any apparent help. Some Western observers simply have concluded that these feats are inexplicable. Others decided that they must have somehow been the product of legerdemain or fraud.

Rather than leaving such mysteries alone in the "dustbin of anthropology" as purported frauds or unsolved events, I have viewed them as exciting challenges to be possibly solved. In working to solve the mystery of the miraculously unbound shaman, I had a tremendous advantage—I knew from firsthand personal experience that the spirits are real.

Therefore, my only remaining work was to collect the known facts; to develop hypotheses as to how and why the spirits did what they did in a given situation; to test and improve the hypotheses through personal experiments; and then replicate these "impossible" or "miraculous" results publicly before observers. Eventually, I could teach students the spiritual "secrets" involved to see if they could be unbound themselves. If they could, it would be additional testimony for the existence of spirits.

In my first public bound-shaman experiments, others drummed to help me move into the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC), the nature of which has already been described. They then tied my hands and feet tightly with rope, covered my body (head included) with a blanket, and tightly wound rope around my entire body. Then with the drumming continuing around me, I called on certain personal helping spirits to come and help release me from the bindings. It took

about three minutes.

Such a sudden success caused me to have doubts about the tightness of the bindings. Therefore, for the next experiment, which was public (before my students), I asked that the bindings be as tight as possible so that there would be no chance that I could struggle free on my own. Again I asked the compassionate spirits for help. This time, despite painfully tighter bindings, I successfully struggled to be free again.

I repeated this public experiment with painful bindings of maximum tightness several times with the same result. Why was this so? My hypothesis was, and remains, that the suffering encourages one's compassionate spirit helpers to release the bindings.

Yet I was not fully satisfied with the results, for I had been slightly exerting myself physically to assist the spirits in being freed from the tight ropes. Then I remembered how the spirits wish to demonstrate their reality when seriously invited. So I decided, as an experiment, next time not to call for help from the compassionate spirits alone, but to invite Middle World spirits everywhere to demonstrate their reality to the "audience" by coming and freeing me from the bindings. Supported with two or three minutes of fast drumming by the entire audience, I made a continuing plea to all those spirits to free me. The ropes suddenly loosened or dropped off with no struggle at all.

Calling in "Middle World spirits everywhere" is not a method to be used in regular healing work, for many of those spirits, such as the suffering beings, are unqualified or unable to help with healing. Healing is fundamentally still up to the compassionate spirits working with the shaman. A distinctive feature of the bound-shaman event is that it gives spirits an opportunity to demonstrate their reality publicly, something that most seem anxious to do. When the demonstration is done, the now unbound shaman thanks them and tells them that they can return from whence they came.

After repeating this experiment successfully several more times on different occasions, I explained the procedure to some advanced students and gave them the opportunity to do the same. Generally

they succeeded in being freed without any struggle, often especially if tightly bound! Importantly, soon the students were usually able to replicate the results in public settings by invoking spirit help in the manner I instructed. In other words, the unbindings were experiments replicable by others.

On these occasions, done usually in darkness, which helps the SSC focus, the spirits generally come to demonstrate their reality in other ways, too. For example, the room or dwelling may shake as if in an earthquake, a phenomenon known in the North American ethnological literature as the "shaking tent." Also many small lights usually appear and move about in the darkness. Giant humanlike images appear to some. Cold winds may blow through the room. Unseen animals, hands, and objects may touch persons, just as they do in indigenous situations. All these events routinely occur, even to those who have never heard of them before.

In summary: why did the spirits come to these public séances to free shamans, shake dwellings, or perform similar feats? The answer was foreshadowed in the chapter titled, "We Exist! The Spirits Call for Recognition."

Perhaps if scientific investigation is made of the repeatable occurrences of the unbound-shaman phenomenon, the spirits may get some of the recognition they deserve. Note: predictable results are based on the experimenter's assumption of the Reality of Spirits, much as the assumption of the reality of the Law of Gravity is a basis for predictable results in Newtonian physics.[10] *Caveats:* this experiment should be conducted only under the safe supervision of a Foundation for Shamanic Studies faculty member who has taught the practice. Various safeguards include: using a blanket sufficiently porous that bound persons can breathe; not tying the bindings around the neck; a maximum of three minutes for keeping persons fully covered and bound; the practice should not be undertaken by persons with cardiac or respiratory problems. In case of doubt, they should consult a physician first.

HEAVENS

DEFINING "HEAVEN" OR "HEAVENS"

We have seen from the Westerners' Upper World reports that they commonly entered heavenlike realms with celestial music or singing. Still, did they really enter into what can be defined as "heavens"? For definitional help, I chose to consult *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, because it represents American common usage.

In Webster's, we find that the word "heaven" often means "the celestial powers; God."[11] While our Westerners encountered "celestial powers" (Chapters 8–11), a single being in human form who might be called "God" was almost never encountered. This is consistent with an earlier quote—what the Canadian Athapaskan people say of those who drum to heaven: "… they don't see God. They just see people who are working for God."

Much depends, of course, on how one defines "God." Some might consider the Westerners' ineffable and ecstatic unions with the cosmos to be union with "God," while others might consider use of the concept of "God" in any form as unacceptable. It is really up to those who make the ascensions to decide whether or not such experiences are evidence of a supreme being or its equivalent.

Another definition in Webster's is that "heaven" refers to "a place or state of supreme happiness." The Westerners, as we have seen, commonly reported experiences of happiness or joy extending to deep ecstasy and union while in the Upper World. Also, according to Webster's, a feature of "heaven" is that it is "the place of existence of the blessed after mortal life." The latter is consistent with the encounters with deceased persons described in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

While the above definitions do not cover all the various phrases ascribed to "heaven" or "heavens" in Webster's, the characteristics given are consistent with the Westerners being in heavens during their journeys, at least in terms of definitions. Therefore, I shall hereafter speak of them as being in heavens.

HEAVENS AND ORGANIZED RELIGION

In many Native North American cosmologies, the Lower World is also seen as a heavenly place where one would like to go after death. This, however, is not the declared view of many of the world's Great Religions, whose adherents number into the billions and among whom the lower realms are commonly portrayed as hells of suffering where people fear going upon death. Such a portrayal ranges from Christianity in the West to Buddhism in the East. In other words, theologically taught cosmology causes persons not to want to go there —ever.

The major organized religions tend to place the heavens in the Upper World. Indeed, the reported ascensions to them by the founders of Great Religions are often the basis of their authority. As Roger Walsh has pointed out, the founders' experiences preserved in sacred texts resemble shamanic journeys.[12] The revelatory details of those ascensions are accepted today by hundred of millions of followers of major religions as a matter of belief. Unlike the founders, the followers are not expected, or sometimes not even permitted, to ascend to those realms except after death, and even then only if they qualify in terms of the tenets of their religion. Since "dead men tell no tales," it is an airtight theological system that maintains its authority as long as no one, such as a shaman, actually goes to the Upper World and comes back with a report that differs significantly from the official versions.

MULTIPLE HEAVENS

If we assume the accuracy of the reports by the various founders of world religions of their heavenly experiences, we then have before us evidence of the existence of multiple heavens, heavens that apparently were individually appropriate for the founders. Likewise our Westerners found multiple heavens, each person discovering his or her own.

Similarity or uniformity of heavens is not mentioned as a requirement in Webster's definitions. Indeed, if a "heaven" is to be "heavenly," it seems only natural that each journeyer would experience a heaven that is perfect for him or her. More

fundamentally, as already discussed, all of nonordinary reality is perfectly "tailored" to the person experiencing it. (However, that does not mean that all nonordinary reality, as in the Middle World, is heavenly for that individual.)

What seems remarkable is that the Westerners' heavens, despite their individual characters, commonly shared themes and types of experiences, as we have seen in the case of celestial music and heavenly choirs. (For example, see Chapter 8. It seems reasonable to conclude that the Westerners were accessing heavens, but there is even more evidence to support this view, as will be discussed.)

THE MYSTERY OF THE INDECIPHERABLE BOOKS AND WRITING

Our Westerners report that in their Upper World ascensions sometimes they find themselves entering a temple, as in the following case of a person who had never been in the Upper World before and did not know what to expect. On this particular occasion, the visitor saw there a monk writing. He found this "really interesting" but decided to go on.

A MONK WRITING IN A GLORIOUS ROOM

I started by going up a waterspout that I had seen when on a ship in the South Pacific. I entered the spout and went up into darkness and then went around the sun for a little while.…

I went up through a cloudlike resistance, the barrier to the Upper World. I was glad that I didn't find St. Peter and the gates of Heaven, because I might have been disappointed. Instead, it was a large *wat* [Buddhist temple], like one might find in Thailand.

I entered this huge temple, into this grand room. It was gold-plated and just glorious. I went into this study and there was a little Tibetan-type monk studying. He was writing. I found this really interesting and wondered what relationship, if any, I had to him.

I decided that I should keep going. Then the drum sounded the return signal. So I whizzed back really fast, retracing all my steps. I came back down the waterspout and jumped onto the ship.[13]

A BOOK WITH DISAPPEARING ARABIC-LIKE LETTERING

The previous report foreshadows this one, in which a Westerner entered a "kind of magician's laboratory" and unexpectedly saw a large book with Arabic-like lettering that disappeared as he approached it.

When I went to the Upper World this morning, I went to the second level and I found a very large city there, with a castle on the edge. I stopped at the edge of the castle wall and climbed up to the first window, which was about two stories up, and there was kind of a ledge there. I climbed through the window into kind of a magician's laboratory, although I didn't see a lot of details. I knew it was a laboratory, because there was a Merlin-type figure there, dressed in the robes and peaked hat. And, I think, white hair, but I didn't notice.

I was immediately attracted to a very large book on one of the tables, with what looked like Arabic lettering. As I approached the book, the lettering disappeared. I quizzed the magician about what was in the book. He didn't answer, so I progressed onwards up to other levels.[14]

ON THE SEVENTH LEVEL: ANCIENT SCROLLS WITH INCOMPREHENSIBLE LANGUAGES AND SYMBOLS

This person's teacher took him to what the journeyer sensed to be the seventh level of the Upper World. He had several adventures on that level, including passing through clashing rocks (his only mission). Then he arrived at a huge set of old buildings in white marble that reminded him of the library at Alexandria. By using a third eye that he had been given, he was able to see printing on the scrolls, "but it was in languages and symbols I didn't understand." He was told that he was not yet ready to understand what this meant. Here is his report:

My teacher took me to a place that I sensed was on the seventh level of the Upper World. There was a box canyon with a steep back wall. Up near the top was a cave-like entrance with huge rocks opening and closing. They were ten to twelve feet tall and hinged at the top.

They opened and closed violently and loudly. There were eight sets of them, each about two to three feet deep. Pondered how to get through and asked my teacher, who told me I had to do it on my own, but to trust my intuition.

After watching for a while, I noticed a pattern to the openings and by timing my moves just right I could get through. I made it halfway and got out of sync. I was able to find a small hole in the side of the cave to wait in until I could get back into time with the rocks.

When I emerged, I was on a large plain and it was so bright I couldn't see very well. I found a path and walked along it. It was much like Africa. I continued around a curving path and came upon a very old man dressed only in a loincloth and very dark-skinned. I think he was from India. He said nothing, but handed me a beautiful blue eye and I knew it was my third eye.

I continued along until I saw a female lion. She said she had a gift for me. It was courage, courage to believe what I see with my third eye.

I continued along the path and came to a huge set of buildings in white marble. They looked very old. I thought of the library at Alexandria. I went inside. There was no one. There were benches and tables, and the walls were lined with scrolls of parchment. I took several down, but they appeared blank.

I wondered for quite a while how I could get the information and then realized I needed to use the eye I was given. With it, I could see printing on the paper, but it was in languages and symbols I didn't understand. I asked out loud what this meant and was told I would be able to comprehend it later when I am ready for it.

At that point, the return sounded and I left the way I came, except this time it was very easy to get through the clashing rocks.[15]

FINALLY A BOOK DISPLAYS A WORD

The Westerners had never been told of the existence of indecipherable books or writing in the Upper World, or anywhere else. In fact, I must confess that at first I did not ascribe any particular significance to

their appearance in reports. Then the following account made me sit up and pay attention. Someone at last was able to read at least one of the words in the otherwise indecipherable books and writings.

[The book] is thick and giant—like the old illustrated manuscripts. It is a nice weight, very heavy. I open it. I can't read it.

It has something on it to indicate what the book is, but it is not clear. It is old lettering. I turn the page to find a whole page of real small print, with an illustrated letter at the beginning, like the old books used to have. It is beautiful. Like the stuff I used to print when I was working for a small press. But I can't read it.

So I look back to the teacher; he seems real interested in what I am doing. He is watching me, so I turn the page again. It is just more and more pages, beautiful … I can't read it. I hold the book real close. I look back at him. He raises his arms like no big deal. I open the book in the middle, the back. It is just the same. The whole book is filled with something, but I just do not get it. It is just not in focus. Can't concentrate to read it.

I ask, should I continue to try to read it? He nods his head. I open the page; turn the page. Something about an island. The word "island" has just come up. I do not know what that means. He shrugs.

Should I keep trying? No, I shouldn't. I close the book. Put it back on the shelf. It just locks in there real snug.

I take another book. I open it one third of the way through. It is like a giant photograph that goes right off the edges. It is black—no, it is gray. I have the feeling that I could fall right into it.

So, I look back at him. It is a mixed message. What should I do? I think I should close the book. So I close it.

He nods—wrong book or something like that. He indicates that I should put it back on the shelf. It was a very strange feeling, like I could have gone right into the book, head over heels. Very strange. A powerful book of some kind. It is like a window. Okay, but that is back on the shelf.

I walk back to the teacher. Should I go back and read more? NO. I guess that is enough for now.[16]

The one word she reported was “island.” To get even a single word from one of these books was a triumph; but what is the significance of the word?

First of all, since it was her ascension, I ordinarily would defer to her primacy in deciding on the meaning. However, the journeyer was not available, and I could not restrain my curiosity. I went to the sixteen-volume *Encyclopedia of Religion* (of which Eliade was editor-in-chief) and looked in the index to see if by any chance there was an entry for “Island.” There was none for “Island,” but there was one for “Islands,” and this is what it said: “Islands as symbols of paradise.”[17] That was quite exciting, but I had been looking for “Island,” not “Islands.” This index entry then referred me to a page in another volume. I pulled it out from the bookshelf and opened it to the indicated page. There I saw the heading “Island,” and it was in the encyclopedia’s section titled “Paradise”![18] Paradise! I could hardly believe my eyes. It was as if the question of whether these were really heavens that the Westerners had visited was answered by the heavens themselves.

THE HEAVENLY BOOK AND ITS TEACHINGS

The Westerners, without foreknowledge that writings of any kind might be part of their ascension experiences, appear to have made a major discovery. The writings and books they encountered in the Upper World may be the Heavenly Book, so named by scholarly authorities such as Geo Widengren. He states, “Few religious ideas in the Ancient Near East have played a more important role than the notion of the Heavenly Tablets or the Heavenly Book.”[19] He notes the discovery of tablets or books by Moses as well as by other prophets and holy personages when they ascended to heaven, as recorded in sacred Near Eastern writings from the time of Babylonia onward.

Widengren also mentions the theme of seven heavens (“levels”), as in this statement about Moses’s ascension: “According to a Neo-Hebraic description … Moses went up through the seven heavens. …”[20] Interestingly, in the Upper World one of our Westerners found

indecipherable scrolls on the seventh level (see this page). Among the shamanic Ostyak people of Siberia there is the belief that one's fate is written on a seven-story mountain by a goddess.[21]

In other words, prophets, ancients, and other holy persons are recognized as ascending to heavens and encountering the Heavenly Book there. This seems to be another reason to conclude that the Celestia Study Westerners did ascend to heavens, especially since they were not expecting to see writing or books of any kind. We already have seen other evidence, such as heavenly choirs and celestial music, that they were in such realms. Thus the Upper World heavens entered by the Westerners were real, in nonordinary reality, along with appearances of what seems to be the Heavenly Book, consistent with reports of its existence by ancients involved in the founding of some major Near Eastern religions.

In summation, these contemporary Westerners, using core shamanic ascension methods, entered heavens and had experiences heretofore generally assumed to be reserved for the founders of Great Religions. These experiences included hearing heavenly choirs and celestial music, entering realms of splendor, meeting deities and the deceased, celestial dismemberment, cosmic union, and the discovery of indecipherable scrolls and books, and finally one displaying the significant word "Island," as noted above. In conclusion, it appears that the heavens, contemporary or ancient, are not products of imagination but are seen (and heard) in remarkably similar ways by persons thousands of years apart.

The reported ancient versions of the Heavenly Book were tablets or scrolls with a variety of emphases (by "ancient," I refer to pre-Christian, pre-Islamic times). The Tablets of Law given to Moses are one example.[22] Starting with ancient Mesopotamia, some other subjects of the Heavenly Book were said to be the following: the Gods, the Mystery of Heaven, the Mystery of Heaven and Earth, Destiny, Wisdom, the Law of Earth and Heaven, Truth, the Secret of Creation and the Causes of the Things, Life, and the Remembrance of Good and Evil Deeds.[23]

Returning to the case of a Westerner being shown a book with the

legible word “Island” displayed, and which turned out to be synonymous with “Paradise,” it would be very interesting to know what was on the unread pages of this book. Ideally future Western shamanic presentations of the Heavenly Book will occur and shed light on its contents.

THE LOWER WORLD REVISITED: HEAVENLY GLIMPSES

For readers who might still wonder whether the Westerners were “preprogrammed” to find what their culture had taught them to expect when they ascended to the Upper World, it is instructive to provide some instances of what they found in the Lower World. In other words, did they find a hell or hells?

First, in their descents, Westerners encountered much more in the Lower World than meetings with power animals, as described in Chapter 6. Despite the fact that we have not yet been able to make a diligent Netheria Study of the Lower World, for decades I have known that: (1) the Lower World tends to be denser and less ethereal for Westerners; and (2) statistically speaking, animal forms are more abundant in the Lower World, while human forms are more abundant in the Upper, although both can be found in either world.

As a preview of a planned Netheria Study, in the following pages one can see some important similarities between the Upper and Lower Worlds. In just the few following examples, the Westerners found, among other things, a heavenlike environment (a “Garden of Eden”), a teacher who is a Christian saint, a possible Heavenly Book, and the sound of music, as in the next report.

A TREMENDOUS SOUND OF MUSIC

I started out moving rather rapidly, not really through a tunnel, but I came to a man with a seal [membrane] right at first. I couldn’t figure it out so I simply bled through the seal. I found myself traveling in darkness and then suddenly many arches and ridges and underground streams. I just sort of moved around in those for a while.

I found myself in a molten place. Suddenly there came a tremendous sound of music. It was not vocal but tonal, rather like beams, like a harmony. It was a tremendous harmony of vibration, of atomic structure. It went from minute to incredibly huge, massive.

In the molten place, the only way I could travel on through was on the tone, a single tone, to get into a greater harmony. I seemed to come to a central sun or core that became a heartbeat and a harmonic sound that stretched outward in all directions. It was almost as if I became the Earth, the sun, and the stars and the moon. It was almost as if there was an inner sound that I was connected to—a cosmic sound, and they speak to one another. It was both beyond and in my heartbeat.

I returned very rapidly. A couple of times I was flying through vapor and then found myself standing on the other side of the seal. I had some time in the tunnel. I was back.[24]

IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

… I am in an empty field. A hole in the ground opens up, and I "fall" into it. I fall down into a place I feel I have been before … only this time, instead of there being only skeletons and rocks and a river of fire … it is as if everything is "on" … it is lush; the animals and the people walking around are stunningly beautiful … and very diverse, all different types of animals, all different races of peoples. Everyone is perfect … I realize I am in the Garden of Eden. And this time, while I know I am a "foreigner" here, I do not feel like I am standing out … people are talking to me, and nodding, and smiling. The air is fragrant, with clove and ginger spices, and warm. I feel very, very comfortable.

An incredibly beautiful woman, with long auburn hair flowing past her waist, brings me an incredible golden-ish elixir to drink. I take it eagerly and drink it. It is the most wonderful thing I have ever tasted … warm, thick, like honey-sweetish, and nourishing. I feel stronger as I drink it, and incredibly sensual. It is very, very powerful … it almost feels like a drug.

Next, this same woman leads me to sofa-chair made from plant

boughs and asks me to sit. As I sink into the softness of the chair, it envelops my body perfectly and I feel as if I am in a cocoon.

I am instantly dreaming I am a white horse, large, powerful, strong, and I am running very fast through time/space … everything is a blur. I feel incredibly powerful, as if I could run forever. After some time running, I come to a beach with bleached white sand and azure blue water. I drink the water, for I am thirsty and know it is okay to drink. The water tastes like a milder version of the earlier drink I was given, just less thick.

I fall into a deep sleep. When I awake, my animal is sitting next to me, licking me all over, washing me gently with her roughish tongue … over and over. She leads me back to my pool of water, and I bathe further, cleansing myself. Then I know it is time to return.[25]

MEETING A TEACHER: SAINT FRANCIS

Teachers were sometimes encountered in the Lower World. The following is from a taped interview with a man whose mother—a Latina Catholic—was dying. He wished, with her approval, to introduce her to nonordinary reality as preparation for her passing. He told his mother to look for an animal, the standard beginning exercise into the Lower World. Instead she met Saint Francis, the patron saint of animals! His account is supplemented by information I obtained through a subsequent interview.

My mom became terminally ill with cancer. Towards the last four to five months she realized that she was going to die. She was under a great deal of pain, and none of the painkillers were working.

My brother made an offer to teach her how to take journeys. She accepted it very readily. She was psychic as a child but began to lose her powers as she got older. At this time she was in so much pain, she welcomed anything to get out of it.

The first time she made a journey she went through the tunnel and she described the tunnel very vividly. She described the elements of the tunnel going out into this beautiful landscape. She had a little seat there where she would sit down and wait for an animal to come. No

one came the first time, the first journey, or in the second journey.

On the third journey, a figure finally showed. Instead of an animal, it was Saint Francis. It wasn't her favorite saint, although (being Catholic) she knew about him. Apparently this was her helper. He never talked to her in words; he talked to her through the mind. She just knew what he was saying. She made more journeys, and she knew the moment she got out of the tunnel she would have to sit down in this little seat and wait for him.

She wrote down very distinctly everything that she experienced. Saint Francis came many times and just touched her, and she would also touch his vestments … Other saints came whose names I didn't know. She kept going on these journeys, and I think in one of the journeys there were two other saints that were also going to be her helpers. They started to say that it might be time for her to go and look (at what was beyond?).

She kept saying, "When?"

Saint Francis kept telling her, "It isn't time yet."

On one of the later journeys, Saint Francis came and finally decided to take her farther on through that beautiful, beautiful landscape. But every time she went, she cried because she didn't want to come back. He took her and they both floated toward this beautiful landscape and she wound up on the edge of a ravine. She saw all these figures in vestments lined up, standing on the other side of this ravine. This was a *sanca* [Spanish for large ravine], so they could not meet. It was so wide at first that she didn't distinguish anyone.

Any time [in ordinary reality] that her illness got very painful, Saint Francis asked her to go back [to where she journeyed]. She got so used to this, she could make it through the tunnel in a split second and out into the other side. She knew she would have to sit there and wait.

Sometimes she waited and Saint Francis didn't come. But most of the time he did come and take her to the ravine again. Each time the ravine was narrower and narrower, and finally she could distinguish individuals on the other side. She saw my little brother who was deceased; he was poisoned when he was two years of age. He was

waiting there, and she saw my grandfather and my father and some other relatives whom she couldn't distinguish. She had been very close to this child (my little brother) and my grandfather.

They were just stretching their hands out, wanting her to cross. My mother had a strong desire to go close to the child, and my grandfather was smiling at her. This went on for many, many journeys until she noticed that the *sanca* kept getting smaller and smaller, although at times it got larger. Toward the very end, a month before she died, the chasm was almost not there. She could almost walk through it, cross it.

After that she didn't want to journey anymore; she didn't have the energy. She went into a coma for a month (before she passed away). She wrote in great detail all these experiences.[26]

AN INDECIPHERABLE BOOK IN THE LOWER WORLD

While the old Babylonian and Iranian writings refer only to *ascending* to the Heavenly Book, the ancient Egyptians wrote of *descending* to the book and finding it in an underground chamber.[27] The following Westerner had a variety of adventures in the Lower World until finally she encountered an indecipherable book, quite similar to those discovered in the Upper.

I went to the Lower World … When I got there, my power animal met me—it is Buffalo [Bison] … He had me ride upon his back. I was sitting on his back and we were walking out over the prairies and I realized I was wearing the clothing and headdress of a Native American chief. Although I was riding on the back of Buffalo, I was carrying a long staff that I was placing upon the ground with each step he took.

We came to an overlook and there we took in the entirety of the plains that lay below us. He took a leap and we were soaring through the air and out into space. We were dancing among the stars and then returned to the edge of the prairie. We were once again walking upon the ground and going up into a heavily wooded area. I loved and admired Buffalo very much and was so proud to be on his back. At a

clearing in the woods, I dismounted.

Then I had the alarming understanding that I was meant to kill my good friend the Buffalo. I was very resistant. My mind kept saying, "No, no, I cannot do this," but at the same time I knew I must. It was a deep knowing. I was very cognizant of both ordinary reality and nonordinary reality—it was like I was conscious in both. I was crying in OR, but experiencing NOR.

I dismounted from Buffalo and stood looking him in the eye. I stroked his head and apologized. He seemed to understand. I took my staff, which had a blade on the end of it, and I plunged it into Buffalo. As he lay dead, I cut him open and removed his heart and liver. I knew I must eat them but I was fighting it. I kept saying, "No, no, I cannot do this." But I had a deeper knowing that I must. I ate the organs raw.

Then I put his head on over mine and I donned his skin. We merged. I became Buffalo, but I had my own mind. I was walking and could feel all four of my feet stepping on the ground. I could feel the deep, deep, powerful wisdom that I knew was Buffalo's. It was a very powerful and emotionally moving feeling. As I walked along, I wondered if this was the next form of life in our universe—the merging of human and animal.

I walked to the edge of a rock overlook and began striking my feet upon the rocks. This action sent sparks leaping out each time I struck my feet. I was looking out in the distance where the sparks were going and I wondered why I was doing this. I wondered if the sparks would land and a new life form would spring up.

As I was watching intently to see the purpose of the sparks, one opened up a wormhole in space, and I was traveling through it at a very fast speed. It was colored with hues of orange, yellow, and white.

It was a very long tube and when I finally came out at the other end, I was standing in front of a pedestal with a very, very large leather-bound book upon it. The book was open and there was writing on the pages. I was looking very intently at the book to see what was written upon the parchment pages.

Although there was writing on the pages, it was of such a style that my mind could not focus on it—it was totally unrecognizable. I did understand that it was extremely important and also that I was not supposed to be able to read it. I was just to know that it was there. [Emphasis supplied.]

At that moment I was sucked back into the wormhole. On the way back, the drumming call-back occurred. When I returned to ordinary reality, I had tears running down my face.[28]

While it is impossible to know if this was the Heavenly Book, it certainly fits the description of the indecipherable books and scrolls of the Upper World and the one that displayed the word "Island."

That the Lower World shares much with the Upper has long been found in my work with Westerners, and the few Lower World examples given here and in Chapter 6 are consistent with that observation. Still, the two worlds tentatively appear distinct in certain respects, and a thorough Netheria Study is needed in this regard.

THE UPPER AND LOWER WORLDS CONSIDERED

The Westerners in our study, following the instructions (reproduced in Appendix B) for accessing the Lower World, sometimes encountered quite heavenly realms below. Contrary to cultural expectations, they did not find the Lower World to resemble the Christian hell, but rather the opposite. Many later said that upon dying they would prefer to go down rather than up, based upon the knowledge they had gained for themselves through core shamanic journeying. Their reports cast additional doubt on any argument that the Westerners' experiences in the Upper and Lower Worlds were merely products of cultural projection.

As noted earlier, in some traditional Native North American cosmologies, the Lower World is seen as a heavenly place where one would like to go after death—contrary to the declared view of many of the world's Great Religions. Due to the widespread influence of such religious teachings, many of the remaining indigenous shamans,

such as in those Mongolia, have become reluctant even to try to descend to the Lower World.[29]

Possibly the closest thing to hell is in our own world, the Middle World, with all its pain and suffering. Those who journey to the Upper and Lower Worlds virtually never report finding pain there, even if they undergo dismemberments. Pain is not found in heavens.

Among some indigenous peoples of the South American tropical forest, there is a myth about a time long ago when heaven and earth were connected by a vine that they could climb and descend at will. Due to various unfortunate circumstances, the vine became severed, and only the shamans were still able to visit heaven. Then the people lost their last shaman. They lament that it is impossible to visit heaven anymore.

Now in our daily lives, the methods of core shamanism give us the freedom to go to both the Upper and Lower Worlds and learn for ourselves what is there. In doing so, individuals discover for themselves that there are heavens beyond this Middle World. Heavens are real, but they are real in another reality, the reality accessed by shamans to help and heal others.

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM AND FUTURE

Shamanism, including shamanic ascension, is a path of independence leading toward spiritual freedom. By spiritual freedom, I mean freedom to know, not just to believe. No longer will it be possible to stop that personal independence by confiscating shamans' drums. Their sound is now available electronically almost everywhere in the world, and the shaman's drum is the ballot box of spiritual freedom.

The sound of that drum can again carry us back and forth through the barriers to the heavens, barriers that we hope will never impede us again. Today in core shamanism, we have the tools to seek help from another reality. Awaiting us in those heavens are the teachers, wise and caring spirits forever ready to heal and share their knowledge, wisdom, and compassion to help us solve the problems of our lives and the world, and to prepare for a better destiny.

To solve these problems may seem to many an impossible enterprise. Yet there now is immeasurable help available to address difficulties that “could only be solved by a miracle.” The time is coming for shamanism to enter the human center stage, for miracles are needed, and miracles are the work of shamans.

The miracle of the unbound shaman is a worthy lesson. Just as the spirits can miraculously unbind the shaman, so can they liberate humanity from its limiting bindings of belief and disbelief. By freeing ourselves from those bindings, we can avail ourselves of the knowledge, wisdom, and help of the teachers and other compassionate spirits.

We no longer are restricted to the teachings of Heavenly Books brought to us by the ancient few, for now the many can travel to the sacred origins of the teachings themselves. Like a spiritual Liberty Bell, the shaman’s drum declares the start of a spiritual revolution, however long it may take. The severed vine to the heavens has been restored. Also restored is the way below, down the metaphoric roots of the vine to realms long denied.

AFTERWORD

The Cave Again

Walter Cline said something more about power quests. He reported that the Salish Okanagan people made paintings on rock walls of the spirits they had encountered there.[1]

Why did they make the paintings? The Okanagan elders explained to Cline that "people with strong power" made them as "a kind of advertisement" and "in some vague way" the paintings "assisted the painter to employ his power."[2] The representations were only of "strong creatures."[3] Cline added that children might visit rock paintings in search of power.[4] Fathers commonly sent their children alone on power quests to paintings they had made many years earlier. The fathers generally seemed only to give clues about the "power paintings" (my term) and their locations, rather than speaking directly to their sons about them.[5] Yet, in one case noted earlier, a father "let his son down by a rope to a cave in a cliff and pulled him up the next morning. During the night in the cave, the boy got Story Rock power, which protected him from all harm."[6] "Story rock" is a term sometimes used by Native North Americans in the West to refer to rocks having paintings. In this case they were also noted as having power. In any event, in these Okanagan instances the intention was to help the children find a protective spirit, ideally one of a father.[7]

Perhaps it is not coincidental that some twenty-six thousand years ago and on the opposite side of the Earth in France, a child's footprints were permanently embedded in the now-hardened mud floor of the Upper Paleolithic cave of Chauvet, whose walls are

covered with paintings of animals.[8] In addition, a survey of footprints in a variety of Upper Paleolithic painted caves concluded that almost all of them were of children.[9] The Okanagan elders may have gifted the world with missing links to a greater understanding of the purposes of the ancient cave paintings of Europe.

And why were the Okanagan children on power quests given only indirect clues about their fathers' paintings and their location? I cannot speak for the Okanagan, nor for people twenty-six millennia ago, but it was traditional knowledge among the Shuar not to tell what you encountered in such a quest until very old. I am now eighty-three, so earlier in this book I told you what happened in the cave when I went questing.

In a sense, this book constitutes my own cave painting for others who come this way, to give them clues for their own power quests. Yet these have only been words. It is up to you, the reader, to enter the hidden reality of spirits and encounter the real thing.

APPENDIX A

Ascending to the Upper World to Compare Experiences

This is an invitation to readers to ascend to the Upper World themselves, to "go over the rainbow," following essentially the same instructions that were given to the Westerners in the Celestia Study. (See Appendix C for useful resources to help your ascensions.) This opportunity is part of the spiritual freedom that shamanism offers.

If you are new to shamanic journeying, this is a chance for you to see how your own Upper World experiences compare to those described for the Westerners in these pages. I have found that generally about 90 percent of Westerners can ascend to the Upper World if they seriously follow the instructions. And the other 10 percent? There is no formal study of them, but "left brain" types such as engineers and lawyers often seem to have the most difficulty!

Since you presumably are now familiar with what is in this book, or have done shamanic journeywork before, you cannot be considered a "naïve" journeyer. So I suggest that you find a few friends who: (1) have not read or heard about the contents of *Cave and Cosmos*, and (2) are willing to experiment. Without telling them about the nature of the Upper World experiences reported in these pages, just give them the methodological instructions for shamanic ascension provided here. Ask them to report what experiences they have after doing some of the exercises. In the spirit of core shamanism, remember to let them interpret their own journeys. Then share the results, discuss them, and arrive at your own conclusions.

If you are already an experienced practitioner of shamanic journeying and have kept a record of your ascensions to the Upper World, you can simply compare the ascension experiences in this book with your own.

Following are the instructions as they were given to students and other Westerners prior to ascensions to the Upper World. They were part of the standard curriculum of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies' "Basic Workshop, The Way of the Shaman."® I had originated, researched, and experimented with these instructions prior to furnishing them to Foundation faculty members as part of their training to teach the Basic Workshop. They were requested to adhere to them as closely as possible, so that all students could have the same methodological knowledge when they took more advanced workshops and courses from any faculty member in North America or abroad.

Although the precise words naturally somewhat varied each time, this chapter presents what all Foundation faculty members, starting with myself, have taught for many years regarding the methods of going to, and working in, the Upper World. The faculty members were given strict rules not to tell students anything more about the Upper World than what is in the following instructions.

FIRST VISIT TO THE UPPER WORLD

Although you are being given ways for ascending to get knowledge and help, the actual experiences resulting from using the methods are yours alone. Do not be surprised if these experiences are often awesome and moving, causing you to experience ineffable joy and tears of happiness. It is no accident that some indigenous peoples call this "the crying way." Such experiences are manifestations of deep shamanic ecstasy.

There is no need to be frightened or worried when journeying "outside of time," away from the Middle World where we live. You will discover that you are entering realms far more loving and compassionate than the Middle World. In the Middle World, pain and

suffering are common. We have long since discovered that pain is not found outside the Middle World.

Often I am asked by beginning students to describe the differences between the Lower and Upper Worlds. This I always decline to do, for if I told them and they believed me, we would be starting a religion, not practicing shamanism. In practicing shamanism, the authority belongs to the individual.

You need to learn the cosmography of the Upper World yourself through experience. No one else can really tell you where the spiritual beings and resources are specifically located in nonordinary reality. This is something you alone must discover through personal practice. My intention is to give you only the minimum of help.

In shamanic cultures, which commonly lacked writing, the accumulation of journey knowledge required great mnemonic discipline, or recall training, as well as constant journey practice. Continual practice is important for us too, but we have the advantage of being able to take notes after our journeys rather than simply depending upon memory alone. Also, we can record accounts during our journeys with the "simultaneous narration" method (described later in this section). Such techniques can enrich and speed your knowledge of the cosmology of nonordinary reality.

If you use this book for learning the methods of shamanic journeying, it is very important that you follow the instructions in the order they are given, and that you achieve success in each exercise, preferably more than once, before going on to the next. I originated the instructions for shamanic journeying based on my decades of research and teaching, and I have used them in personally training many thousands of people in shamanism, including those I trained to become faculty members of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.

Ideally, you should try to do each exercise before reading the examples of the experiences of others doing it. That way you will be able to compare your own experiences to those of others without wondering if you have been influenced by their accounts.

The shamanic journey in most indigenous societies is undertaken with the aid of monotonous percussion sound, especially drumming.

Utilizing the sound of drumming for the shamanic journey, either with a live drum or with a shamanic-journey drumming recording, requires a journeyer to be centered and able to maintain concentration and purpose. Persons who are not centered or mentally and emotionally "together" cannot maintain the discipline necessary for journeying with auditory driving. Without centeredness, it is just drumming and nothing more. Accordingly, this method is exceptionally safe.

Most drummed shamanic journeys, including those done by shamans in Siberia, are less than half an hour long, and one can return at any time without waiting for the drumming to stop. Indeed, the continuous drumming also supports a return journey.

Even if you should forget to come back when the drumming signals you to return, you will just drift back anyway, since the drumming will no longer continue to support you in the other reality. In many ways, shamanic journeying is safer than dreaming, for the journeyer can return whenever she or he likes.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ASCENT

You will shortly have your first opportunity to visit the Upper World. Be sure you thoroughly understand the following instructions before you start. To carry out this initial exercise, you can use a shamanic-drumming recording (see "Departing the Middle World," this page).

Wait until you are calm and relaxed before undertaking this or any other shamanic journey. Avoid consciousness-altering substances, including alcohol, during the preceding twenty-four hours, so that your power of concentration will be good and your mind clear. Be sure you feel rested and awake. Otherwise you might fall asleep to the relaxing sound of the shamanic drumming.

Turn off any telephones, doorbells, pagers, or wristwatch alarms, so that you will not be disturbed. Remove your shoes, loosen your clothing, and lie comfortably on the floor or a bed. If you are a regular practitioner of a meditative discipline such as yoga and accustomed to sitting for such a purpose, you may prefer that position

instead. Darken the room as much as possible, and place a bandana or kerchief across your eyes.

The most important thing about your body position is that it should be one that most easily allows you to leave your body behind—in other words, a position that does not require you to divert part of your consciousness to maintaining some posture in ordinary reality. For this reason, persons in our culture, as well as in some indigenous ones, as in parts of Native western North America, prefer the lying position. In Siberia and areas adjacent to it, a sitting or standing position is usually preferred. In the latter case, the standing position may be augmented with body movement that usually includes additional percussion sound from bells and other metal objects worn by the shaman.

SIMULTANEOUS NARRATION

If you wish to maximize the effects of journeying to the sound of recorded drumming, you may want to try simultaneous narration, a technique I developed in the early 1980s whereby one talks out loud describing a journey from start to finish, as it occurs. Even when nothing is happening, the journeyer should keep talking, if only to say, “Nothing is happening.” One will soon get tired of repeating this phrase; at that point, things usually do begin to occur. To further increase the value of simultaneous narration, one may wish to talk into a lapel microphone attached to a recording device (a separate unit from the player that is providing the drumming sound).

In this way, your simultaneous narration of the journey is preserved and can subsequently be reviewed by you to make notes of details you might have forgotten. Furthermore, your recordings can be kept in a permanent archive of your experiences. This is useful, because earlier journeys often assume new significance as you progress in your understanding, and you may wish to review them.

Simultaneous narration greatly focuses one’s attention and thereby can result in a journey more vivid than one without it, and often even stronger than one done with live drumming. If you are journeying to a live drum, however, simultaneous narration is not a practical

technique, for the sound of the drum will interfere with making a clear voice recording. Whether or not you do simultaneous narration, after any journey, review your experiences and make notes about them for future reference. The above methods are part of the basis for a Foundation course named “Harner Shamanic Counseling Training.”

LIVE DRUMMING

If a live drum is used, advise the drummer to beat the drum in a monotonous, moderately loud, and rapid tempo. The volume of the drumbeats and the intervals between them should be unvarying. A drumming tempo of approximately 205 to 220 beats per minute is usually optimal for most journeying. The style and speed of the drumming can be best ascertained by listening to a drumming CD or MP3 produced by the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.

Lengthy, monotonous, shamanic-journey drumming can be hard work, but the drummer should try to do it for fifteen minutes (ten minutes is usually not quite good enough). At the end of the fifteen minutes, the drummer should strike the drum with four short rolls to signal that it is time for you to get ready to come back. Then the drummer should beat the drum very rapidly (significantly faster than the 205- to 220-beat range) for about half a minute for your return journey, and finally beat four more short rolls to signal that you should now be back in the room. With practice, the drummer should find it easier to provide a fifteen-minute journey without tiring.

With recorded journey drumming on a CD, you do not have to be concerned about your drummer becoming tired, so you can journey for as long as thirty minutes, if you desire. If you want a fifteen-minute journey, simply select the fifteen-minute track on the CD. The drumming CD for journeying, like others I developed starting in 1980, has the proper tempo and drumming call-back signals described above. They also have the advantage of controlling the regularity and volume of the individual drumbeats. These are available from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies website. (For more information, see Appendix C.)

DEPARTING THE MIDDLE WORLD

Put on your earphones. Connect them to one of the recommended Shamanic Journeying and Drumming CDs/MP3s (see Appendix C) on a CD player or on a computer, iPod, or other MP3 player.

Cover your eyes with a bandana or kerchief to exclude light. Rest there quietly for a few minutes and consider how you will start your ascent.

Before beginning to journey to the Upper World, it is very important that you, like an indigenous shaman, select as a departure site a place in the Middle World (that is, on the Earth's surface) where you have seen yourself in ordinary reality at some time in your life. It may be a place you can see today outside your window, or it may be a site you visited years ago. The important thing is that you know its approximate location here in the Middle World and that you can visualize it to some degree.

It is not enough simply to close your eyes and visualize any departure point without knowing from first-hand experience that it is located in the Middle World. Without this discipline, journeyers can be confused about what world and level they are starting from and where they are arriving. Experienced shamans map accurately by having permanent Middle World departure points.

It does not matter how long ago you last saw the Middle World departure site in ordinary reality; nor does it matter whether the place today still looks in ordinary reality as you remember it. In shamanic terms, what you are seeing is the spirit of the place, and that endures regardless of any subsequent ordinary-reality changes.

Once you have selected a departure site, try to keep using it indefinitely for ascension. By repeatedly using the same departure place, you will find it increasingly easy to visualize the start of your visionary journey. The gradual repetition also triggers ever-deeper stages of the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC). In other words, the familiarity of this initial routine in itself is important in changing consciousness and in moving into increasingly vivid experiences. Growing familiarity with these first routes from the departure site permits one to make faster journeys and have more time in the Upper

World.

Remember the classic indigenous shamanic departure points described earlier, but do not feel restricted to them. Some contemporary New York City journeyers, for example, do not necessarily have vivid connections with mountains, trees, or even fireplaces. Therefore they may choose to jump up from the top of a skyscraper, such as the Empire State Building, which they can clearly visualize from their everyday experience. While this can be a successful departure place for them, obviously we will not find examples of its use in the literature on Siberian shamanism. The important thing is not whether the departure location is human-made or natural, but that it is a place, not some moving object (such as a bird, airplane, or rocket in flight), and that you have seen it firsthand in ordinary reality.

A departure point, whether a mountain, tree, or something else, does not necessarily have to reach to the sky, but it should be higher than its surroundings. An example comes to mind from a couple of decades ago. A small team from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies was visiting the Caribou Eskimo (Inuit) northwest of Hudson Bay, and one of their young men came to us to learn shamanic methods, since the missionaries had prohibited and essentially wiped out shamanism and shamanic healing in his community. We instructed him in basic journey techniques only so that he could learn all the rest directly from the spirits. There were no trees or mountains there on the tundra, so he chose as his departure point to visit the Upper World a low rounded hill on an island near his village. Although it was not even a high hill, he was successful in using it, since it still was above the surrounding flat terrain.

The important point in selecting a departure place is finding one that works for you. For some, as an illustration, it is a tree.

USING A TREE

In a relaxed and unhurried way, consider trees that you have personally seen in ordinary reality. Pick a relatively tall one for which you have felt a special kinship. It could be in your backyard right

now, or it may be one you saw years ago elsewhere. Again, you should have seen it firsthand and know the approximate location. It does not matter if the tree has since fallen or been cut down; you are working with the spirit of the tree and that place. As long as you can remember that tree and its location, you can use it as a reliable departure site for the Upper World.

Try to glimpse the tree with your eyes closed or covered. If you do not even get a faint glimpse of the tree, do not be discouraged. You may be more kinesthetic and need to feel yourself climbing rather than seeing the climb. With practice, there is a good chance that you will later start to see it as well.

Then start to climb it. Avoid preconceptions about where the top of the tree will end. The tree may continue all the way into the Upper World, or you may reach its top right away, long before you get out of the Middle World. In the latter case, simply jump up from it.

You may see just the tree as you climb, as you would in ordinary reality; or you may see yourself, as an outside observer, climbing the tree. Both of these types of experiences are valid. The latter I call an "out-of-spirit" experience, for, from a shamanic point of view, one portion of your spirit or soul is climbing the tree while another portion observes it. This experience is one type of the doppelgänger effect known in the shamanic literature; i.e., the experience of being in two places at the same time. Most persons, however, do not start experiencing the doppelgänger until they have done more work.

USING A CHIMNEY

The old European chimney technique of departure, noted earlier, is often a popular one today, because most of us can visualize some fireplace that we know or remember, often with fond memories. Try to visualize it, whether or not a fire was burning there. When you undertake the journey to the Upper World, enter the fireplace and move up the dark chimney. From the top of the chimney you may find yourself in a cloudlike tunnel, or rising into the open sky, sometimes seeing the Earth below you.

USING A MOUNTAINTOP

Select a mountain that you have visited firsthand in ordinary reality and whose summit you have seen, even if only at a distance. Visualize yourself at the crest, and jump up from its summit.

USING A RAINBOW

To use a rainbow to depart for the Upper World, visualize one you have seen somewhere during your life. It may have been a full arc or a half-rainbow. Either way, visualize the rainbow as you remember it at the place you saw it in ordinary reality. When you journey, start up where the rainbow leaves the earth, climb it, and jump upward from its zenith.

YOUR MISSION

Now state the mission to yourself three times so that you do not forget its purpose. This mission statement is important for successful shamanic journeying. State it to yourself several times before starting. For this first time, I suggest: “My mission is to go to the Upper World to explore it until I am called back by the drum.” If you are using the simultaneous-narration technique with a lapel microphone and tape or other recording device, you can record your mission intention by dictating aloud. Turn on the shamanic drumming.

PASSING FROM ORDINARY TO NONORDINARY REALITY, THE FIRST BARRIER

Now review the earlier discussion of the first barrier or transition zone between OR and NOR, and methods of crossing it (this page). Follow the instructions there, listening for several minutes to recorded or live journey drumming. Then, in a darkened room, with your eyes closed and covered, continue to listen to the drumming, and visualize your pre-selected departure point.

Whatever the departure place, remember how it looked. For example, if the site is a fireplace, enter it and rise on the flames; if there was no fire, just enter the fireplace and go up the dark, empty flue. Now you are making the transition from OR to NOR. This constitutes crossing the first barrier. Keep on ascending the chimney and then beyond. As mentioned earlier, sometimes there is a kind of

cloud tunnel that continues beyond the chimney. Other times there is no tunnel and one simply rises, perhaps seeing the landscape of the Earth receding below.

If you choose a tree, mountaintop, or skyscraper as your departure point, simply jump up or rise from the top. You should have no difficulty ascending, for these are journeys of the spirit, and your spirit is not constrained by the gravitational forces of ordinary reality.

PASSING THE SECOND BARRIER

Traveling upward is not enough in itself to reach the Upper World. Even if you find yourself high above the Earth, you are still in the Middle World unless you have passed through the barrier between worlds. Without transcending it, you are still in the Middle World, even if you go out of our solar system and to other galaxies, for what astronomers see is still only the Middle World. As you continue ascending, *it is very important to pass through the barrier to the Upper World so that you can be completely sure that you have reached it.*

Usually one encounters this barrier fairly soon. Normally it is not an obstacle but simply a permeable transition zone, such as a cloud layer or membrane. If a membrane, its thinness often is almost like a sheet of paper, although it is a sheet that extends as far as one can see. Usually the zone is so permeable that you can go through it simply by focusing your will.

Very rarely the barrier will be resistant to your passing. Even then you may find a hole or opening in the barrier zone through which you can pass. Avoid becoming tense if you do not transcend the zone right away. Keep trying in a relaxed but determined manner. Success in journeying depends on a combination of effortless persistence and relaxed concentration. Do not feel discouraged if your first journey is faint; it will change with practice. Also, imagery may occur either in black-and-white or in color.

IN THE UPPER WORLD

THE FIRST LEVEL OF THE UPPER WORLD

Once you pass through the barrier or transition zone, you are on the first level of the Upper World. Take this opportunity to begin getting acquainted with it. You can explore in any direction on the first level, or you may prefer to go up to another level and explore there. Each level has its own minor barrier or transition zone, which may manifest as another cloud layer or other permeable divider. Wherever you decide to go, remember the route you are taking and the sequence of things you see. This facilitates your return to the Middle World from which you departed, as well as a return to these same Upper World places in future journeys.

When you are using the simultaneous-narration method, keep describing what is happening throughout your journey. The important thing is to keep on talking, because describing what you see and what you experience strengthens the vividness of your journey, which can appear in black-and-white or in color. As I said before, if you do not see anything, keep saying, "Nothing is happening." With such boring repetition, things usually start to change and you begin seeing.

THE SECOND LEVEL AND ABOVE IN THE UPPER WORLD

If you wish to continue on to the second level of the Upper World, simply journey upward again. This time, since you are already journeying in spirit, it normally is easier to ascend to the next level.

There are more levels above the second one that you can explore if you have drumming time and wish to do so. Each one is reached after passing through another barrier or transition zone. Again, these zones may appear like cloud layers, membranes, tissue paper, or something similar.

Each level is, in a sense, almost a world in itself, with much for you to discover in all directions, so do not feel you have to rush your travels. You can always make additional journeys to a particular level whenever you desire.

In core shamanism, there is no "official" number of levels in the Upper World. Cross-cultural reports on the number of levels vary considerably, and therefore the number is not a core aspect of shamanism. In tribes among whom I lived in the Amazon, people

rarely needed to count beyond the five fingers on their hand, since money, tribute, and taxes had not yet become part of their lives. Any number beyond five was usually just “many.” Accordingly, among the shamans there, only a few levels were usually counted. In contrast, shamans in the Central Asian regions of Tuva and Mongolia reported the greatest number of levels when they lived close to major civilizations where extensive counting had long since been part of the cultures.

Statements about the number of levels and their characteristics are thus not part of core shamanic methods but rather conclusions that shamanic journeyers gradually draw as they progress in their firsthand investigations. The landscapes and levels you are shown in journeys are your working cosmography, a cosmography that is perfect for you. That is what matters to the shamanic journeyer.

In your journeys, keep track not only of your departure point, but also the number of levels through which you pass. There is a membrane or cloud layer separating each level. With practice you will gradually become acquainted with the sequences of levels, what is to be found on them, and under what circumstances. Also, on any level there are “veils” that may be drawn aside, depending on your mission and what the spirits feel should be revealed to you at that time.

It may seem that I have told you too little about what to expect on the various levels. That is intentional, for I am attempting only to teach you a method. The actual discoveries of what is there are yours. That is the nature of the autonomy of shamanic work. In fact, once while I was teaching some Russians, an outstanding Siberian shaman who was present told me that I was “telling too much” about journeying, even though he agreed with the accuracy of what I had said.

RETURNING FROM THE UPPER WORLD

When it is time to descend from the Upper World, the drum on the recording will sound four rolls to alert you. The rolls will be followed by a fast return beat. With the help of the beat, immediately come

back the way you went up. Do this rapidly, as the return beat is usually only about half a minute long. At the end you should be at your Middle World departure place. If drumming is provided by an assistant rather than a CD, the same procedure is followed. Then, in silence, allow yourself about ten minutes to write down your experiences so that you can remember what you learned and be prepared to compare them with future journeys.

Try to remember the place on the first level from which you departed upward, so that you can use it again in future journeys. The repeated use of the same departure or "takeoff" sites in Upper World levels will help you travel more rapidly and more vividly in your future ascents.

MORE EXPLORATIONS

If you wish, make one or two additional exploration journeys in the Upper World to increase your knowledge before proceeding to the next exercise. By using a drumming CD or other Foundation for Shamanic Studies recording, you can choose to have a preset fifteen-minute or half-hour journey. If live drumming is being done by an assistant, then probably fifteen minutes would be more practical, as noted before. It is usually distracting to attempt to drum for yourself simultaneously while journeying, although some shamans may do it.

During one's first journeys, often the experience is faint and fleeting, and lacks the vividness of what people normally call "reality." This is to be expected, for when one is just starting to see shamanically, it often takes time to begin to perceive nonordinary reality clearly. Be patient, and you will be rewarded for your efforts.

Thus, at first you may find it hard to maintain your concentration at times, for your immersion in the shamanic state of consciousness is not yet well developed. You may find your mind wandering and returning to ordinary-reality preoccupations. Again, be patient and continue practicing. Any spiritual discipline requires time, though one of the remarkable things about shamanic journeying is how rapidly most people succeed in doing it.

Not everyone is a natural visualizer, although most are. Other

persons may be more kinesthetic and journey primarily through feeling their way. Others, such as many attorneys and mathematicians, report that they seem to "think" their way through their early journeys. Whatever mode of perception you start with, build on it, and in time the other modes of perception can be developed. The most important thing is not to give up. After all, if you did not achieve nirvana in your first few Buddhist meditation sessions, would that mean that you were doomed to failure on that spiritual path?

MAPPING YOUR JOURNEYS OF ASCENSION

As you make more ascensions, review your accumulating notes, for the different journeys will begin to fall into place like pieces of a cosmic jigsaw puzzle. You will gradually become not just an explorer but also a cosmographer of the Upper World. Careful note-taking and mapping will help your work and expedite your future journeys. If you keep taking notes over the weeks and months, you will have a record of incredible adventures in nonordinary reality. Furthermore, they will be nonfictional, because they really happened to you!

In some shamanic populations, such as the Sami and Siberian peoples, maps of what shamans had discovered were painted on the skin surfaces of their drums (see Plates 6 and 7). In our culture, we can also make maps in our notebooks and on large sheets of paper, adding to them as our knowledge increases (see Plates 8 and 9).

Some of my students have even made dramatic three-dimensional or sculptural "maps" of their journey discoveries. But even the best maps cannot remotely do justice to the incredible experiences and cosmology awaiting the shamanic journeyer.

Do not avoid using your will to journey. The shamanic use of will is analogous to that which one exerts when driving an automobile on new roads in a strange country. As with automobile drivers, shamans use will and intention to travel in a general direction for a particular goal, not knowing in advance what they will specifically see along the way or what incidents will occur.

Those who seriously pursue shamanic journeying will discover that there is far more to nonordinary reality than what contemporary Westerners normally call “imagination.” Every journey is in a sense an experiment. Through continued personal experiments, you can eventually conclude for yourself whether your nonordinary experiences are real and capable of providing extraordinary information and help.

ADDITIONAL UPPER-WORLD PRACTICE

ASCENDING TO A TEACHER FOR HELP

Where does one go to find a teacher in heaven? You will have to discover for yourself the exact level on which you discover your teacher or teachers (for you may have more than one) in the Upper World. The teacher may live on the very first level, the second, or higher. This will be your own discovery, part of your accumulation of personal knowledge.

Wherever you discover a teacher, remember the level, since that is the surest place to find him or her in future journeys. Shamans know exactly what level their teachers are on and can go back to them there.

With discovering the identity and abode of your own spirit teachers, you are getting ready to acquire some of the incredible knowledge and wisdom they possess and are willing to share with you in response to your questions.

A common query from people who have not done this divination work is: How can I trust the answers I get? The standards for trust are the same as in ordinary reality to conclude whether a doctor, lawyer, psychotherapist, or any other person is trustworthy; in other words, on the basis of their track records with you. One of the best ways to learn whether your teacher, power animal, or any other spirit is trustworthy is to ignore their advice (although I do not recommend it)! Subsequently you will have ample opportunity to decide whether you made a mistake in not trusting the advice, or in misinterpreting

it. You often have a metaphorical answer, in part or in whole, and you must keep in mind that you might not have understood it accurately.

A direct way is simply to utilize the answer in your life and see if it is accurate and practical. That is the real test. At the same time, you must remember that the spirits are not giving you orders, only their advice. You must combine their apparent advice with your ordinary-reality "street smarts." Finally, you have to take responsibility for your actions. When I hear a person justify their actions by saying, "The spirits told me to do it," I know that he/she does not yet know shamanism, for the helping spirits are our partners, not our bosses.

After you have met a spirit teacher and started working with him or her, you may sometimes find the teacher "not at home" in a journey. Do not be discouraged. Teachers are somewhat like full professors who do not always keep their office hours. When the teacher is not at the usual place, it usually means that you are being given permission to seek a second teacher, not as a substitute but as an additional resource for your development. Therefore, if the teacher is not in the usual location, reframe your journey purpose to discover an additional teacher, and continue your journey to find one and ask him or her your question.

On other occasions your teacher may be home but refers you to another teacher who is a specialist in addressing the kind of question or problem you pose. Your original teacher may take you to the other teacher or simply indicate where to find him or her. If you are given no specific help on how to find the other teacher, simply set off on your own.

Give the teacher a chance. Do not assume that you know better than the Upper World spirits who should be your teacher. Finding a teacher is not like shopping. Work with the teacher on a number of journeys and see what the results are. Then, if you still feel dissatisfied, simply do not go back to that teacher. I must say, however, that I have never heard of a case where a person who works seriously with the teacher is dissatisfied with the results.

If your teacher turns out to be a deceased relative who was close to

you in ordinary reality, do not be surprised if you feel considerable emotion. You may even find yourself crying. Treasure the experience: you are having an opportunity to renew your connection with a person you never expected to see again.

Often these are opportunities for mutual sharing of unfinished business and for discussing things that were not possible before the person died. Shamans in tribal cultures routinely transcend the perceived barrier that separates the living and the dead. For the shaman, there is no finality to what we call death; everything is accessible outside of time.

Emotion, whether represented by tears or by joy, is a good sign when one has ascended, for it indicates that one is taking the journey seriously. Beyond this, it may mean that the visitor to the Upper World is experiencing ecstatic spiritual happiness, an almost indescribable state in which one cries and is joyful at the same time.

Do not be afraid to occasionally experience fear, for it too is a sign of taking the other reality seriously. Through temporarily experiencing fear, and then discovering there was really nothing to fear, one learns to trust heaven.

First Exercise: Asking a Question

The quality of your results in seeking knowledge depends primarily upon the spirits and whether you approach them successfully. To prepare for this work, you need to go again to the Upper World. You should use the same departure site to leave the Middle World, ascend, and pass through the barrier or transition zone to arrive in the Upper World. The only thing new is your objective or mission. This new mission must be clear in your mind before your ascent as well as during it.

In this first visit to a teacher, I suggest that you plan to ask for information to help solve a problem in your own life. Later, as you gain knowledge for yourself through the divination journeys, you will be in a better position to ask cosmological questions and to help others if they should request it of you.

Try to select a question that is personally important. Only you, and you alone, are qualified to decide what is an important question. Likewise, if you are later doing divination journeying for someone else, only that person is qualified to decide what is an important question for him or her. Do not carry out divination journeys about other persons without their permission. This is one of the ethics in shamanism.

For a question to be important does not necessarily mean that it has to have cosmic significance. It can be as simple as a question about how to organize your work week. The main issue is whether the question is important to you or, if you are seeking an answer at the request of someone else, important to him or her. Do not judge for others whether their questions are significant.

Emphasizing your own important questions when beginning this work focuses your mind and encourages you to keep focused in your journeys. In other words, you are highly motivated to get an answer. Later, when you have done more journey work, you will usually find it easy to get an answer to an almost infinite range of questions.

Compose your question unambiguously, for properly framing the question is half the secret of success in divination. Avoid using the words “and” or “or” because you thereby create two parts to the question. If the teacher then answers, you may not know if the first or second part of your question is being addressed. This is especially true if the teacher gives you symbolic answers.

Each question should be simple and clear, and normally only one question should be used in each visit to a teacher. An important reason for keeping to your single question is to allow you time to receive additional details during your journey. The teacher may disappear, as has been explained before, but this should not be construed as indicating that the answer is terminated. Whether the teacher remains present or not, he or she has the power (and normally uses it) to manage or direct the events of the rest of your journey. They may be literal or metaphoric aspects of the answer.

Nothing is simple, for the teacher may engage in a lengthy dialogue that may cause you to ask more questions as part of the exchange.

Furthermore, after answering your initial question or request, sometimes the teacher takes the opportunity of your visit to give you some unrelated information the teacher apparently thinks you should know. Benefit by studying all the events closely. Nothing after meeting the teacher is unimportant.

Now please review what you have already learned about how to ascend to the Upper World, including the use of a departure place that you have known in ordinary reality here in our Middle World, having a specific mission in mind before departing, and knowing how to ascend and return.

Prepare yourself to seek a teacher. If this is your first attempt, avoid preconceptions about who it will be. Before you depart, repeat your primary mission silently or aloud to yourself: "I want to meet my teacher." Second, repeat to yourself three times a question that you will ask your teacher. This will be a divination mission, so the question should be important to you. Write it down beforehand in a notebook, if possible; otherwise, repeat it to yourself three times so that you do not forget it.

If you are using recorded drumming, then you can choose to employ the simultaneous-narration technique (see this page). If you wish, you can also use a lapel microphone to dictate a running account of your experiences into a recorder.

Next, journey up to the first level of the Upper World in the manner you have already learned. This time, when you get there, look around and see if there is anyone who looks human.

If you do meet someone in human form, immediately ask him or her, "Are you my teacher?" It is essential to do this in order to be sure that you are talking with your teacher and not just anyone. The being may answer affirmatively or negatively telepathically, in spoken words, by nodding or shaking the head, or by ignoring you.

If the person does not indicate that he or she is your teacher, then simply travel on, either on the same level or by going up to the next. Usually it is easy to go up to the second level, since you are already traveling as spirit. Sometimes on the first level one encounters a large white bird that is available to carry travelers up to the second level.

This is only a temporary guide, assisting you for this particular purpose. If you do not meet anyone who admits to being your teacher on the second level, then proceed up to the third level, and so on.

When someone in human form admits to being your teacher, then ask your question without delay. Pay close attention to what immediately occurs. Generally the first thing the teacher says or does is the core of the answer to the question, even if you do not understand it at the time.

Various things can happen next. If the teacher has spoken to you through thoughts or words, you may find yourself in a dialogue. In such a dialogue, stay with the subject of your question rather than trying to bring up unrelated questions. Otherwise you may not know which question the teacher is answering.

Remember that you can make another ascension whenever you like in order to ask another question. This is not a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the oracle at Delphi in ancient Greece. Even with that oracle, the same rule would probably have been appropriate; otherwise you could not be sure to which question the oracle's answer applies.

The teacher may respond not by speaking or by thought communication, but instead by simply motioning in a certain direction, indicating where you should go. Follow the indication and see what you encounter. At this point the teacher sometimes disappears and is not seen again during the entire journey, but do not think that you are not being given an answer. As indigenous shamans know, the teachers (which they may consider deities or sacred ancestors) have incredible powers there, and they usually orchestrate your journey experiences so that you have to learn to "read" them as parts of the answer to your question.

If the teacher already has communicated the answer in thoughts or words, then metaphoric or literal scenes that are subsequently shown usually provide details elaborating the answer. Therefore keep traveling and pay close attention to whatever happens, even if the teacher is nowhere to be seen. The teacher knows when the drumming will end, so just keep journeying until you hear the call-

back drumming signal. When you are thus called back, thank the teacher, even if you cannot see him or her, and return down to the Middle World and your body, retracing your route very quickly.

After you have returned to the ordinary reality of our world, sit up and review your experience carefully. Note where you met your teacher, because you want to know how to find him or her again. Especially review everything that happened after you asked your question, remembering the first thing that the teacher said or did, and how that might be the core answer. Then review all that happened afterward.

In this review, note and think about the details you were shown or experienced. Attempt to understand how they are supplementary answers to the initial core answer. You should have a notebook in which to record all this information afterward.

Siberian and other tribal shamans considered it disrespectful of the spirits they visited in the other worlds not to honor all the information they received. Since the shamans did not have writing, and thus no notebooks, they made great efforts to remember everything they could, including later painting the surfaces of their drums as mnemonic devices to remind themselves of their discoveries. By paying attention and remembering what we are told or given, we show our respect for helping spirits and thereby invite even greater success in our future ascensions.

Second Exercise: Requesting Health Advice or a Healing

When you ascend to the Upper World for health advice, you are only asking for information. The teachers there are so powerful, however, that they may choose to help through direct action. They may decide not only to provide you with health advice, but also to heal your condition.

These spirits can heal without bothering to show you anything. But by revealing to you particular treatments, they teach you how to continue the healing work later. These direct demonstrations by the teachers are a major way that shamans acquire healing methods that

they later use on their patients and themselves. These techniques vary according to the immediate case at hand. This is why shamans, through many visits to the teachers, can gradually ascertain the appropriate treatment for each condition, though details vary with each patient.

Healing techniques demonstrated by a teacher may include showing you methods of treatment for you to continue back in ordinary reality. For example, a teacher may give you a potion, identify the plant(s) from which it is made, and tell you how to prepare it. A teacher may also refer you to specific physicians you have not yet heard of.

Now prepare to make another ascent to a level in the Upper World where you previously found a teacher. This time, ask a health-related question. You can also journey to a teacher to ask directly for a healing—and not just for yourself, but also for others, if they have requested it. You should start practicing on your own health first, however, to prepare for the day you may be ready to help others. Do not feel selfish, for this is an opportunity to gain experience. Also, you should become as healthy as possible in order to be able to benefit others. Continue such practice so that you will be better prepared to serve others spiritually if they should ask.

Decide what specific healing you desire. Consider your personal health: is there any condition that you would like alleviated or cured that has been bothering you? Most of us, particularly as we get older, have no trouble targeting some pain, discomfort, or health problem we would like to have cured. The pain or illness can be either physical or mental/emotional. Pick one such problem and make a clear sentence of the request: for example, “Please cure my backache.”

When you seek a healing, do not ask a question of your teacher; just request the specific healing desired. Sometimes the teacher may not demonstrate the healing and may even disappear, but normally, during the rest of your journey, the teacher will be working to alleviate your illness or pain.

Remember, as I noted, that when you seek health advice from a

teacher, you may also be given a healing. Conversely, when you journey for healing, you may also be given advice or information instead or together with the healing. So remember and learn everything you can.

If you receive a healing or advice, thank the teacher or the helping spirit before you leave. If you receive a healing, go back for repeated treatments until you are completely well. For this I recommend ascending no less than once a week. A last note: out of respect for the sanctity of your teacher or helping spirits, unless it is for a high purpose (such as the way some have shared their experiences in this book, or in a training workshop), I recommend keeping their exact identities to yourself.

Keep in mind that shamanism is part of a holistic approach to health. In doing this work, do not give up regular medical or other ordinary-reality treatments, but add a missing spiritual dimension to such treatments by visiting your teacher to ask that he or she heal the troubling condition.

APPENDIX B

Descending to the Lower World to Compare Experiences

My previous book on shamanic methods, *The Way of the Shaman*, described common locations used by tribal shamans to depart for the Lower World. The types of departure places that I now mention are well known to indigenous shamans. Contemporary Westerners also typically have success using them.

These departure points include a hole in a specific location, a cave, a spring or well, a lake, a bay of an ocean, a tree with a hole in it (for entering the tree and going down), a whirlpool, and a waterfall's pool (or an entrance behind the waterfall).

Whatever the entrance you choose, it should be firmly located in the Middle World and known to you firsthand in OR. It is important that you do not simply close your eyes and visualize any cave or other type of departure place. For accurate shamanic journeying, you should know that it is in the Middle World and where. I advise using the same departure place in all your Lower World journeys in order to keep track of levels and places where you have been in NOR, and to know how to return rapidly and accurately to the Middle World. The following are a few examples of openings, with others described in Chapter 6.

AN OPENING IN A SPECIFIC LOCATION

An opening into the earth was a common departure place for going to the Lower World. For example, the shamanistic societies of the

Puebloan peoples of the American Southwest used the *sipapu (se pa po* or *sepapu)* as their entrance place. For the Hopi, the sepapu was a specific hole in the Grand Canyon, the hole being identified also as the Center of the World.[1] For many of the Puebloans, it was a hole in the floor in their sacred semisubterranean kiva chambers. On a shamanic level, these too were the Center of the World. Incidentally, one of the objections raised by Puebloan Taos elders against installing plumbing in their villages was that it would possibly obstruct the sacred passageways from the kivas' *sipapus* to the Lower World.[2]

Another kind of entrance is found among some tribal peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America. Here the shaman sometimes descended through a hole dug in the earth floor of the plank house.[3] For the Polar Eskimo (Inuit) shaman, the hole was typically excavated in the ice floor of the winter dwelling, the igloo, and the shaman went through it down into the sea.[4]

One can also use the hole made by a burrowing animal, such as a fox, woodchuck, or gopher. The rabbit hole made famous by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is an obvious example of how classic children's literature abounds in unconscious shamanic perspectives. I advise Westerners not to use the openings of drains into sewage systems as a way to start for the Lower World. Not only are they inappropriate for such sacred work, but they lead only to elsewhere in the Middle World. New Yorkers who try using them usually end up in the Hudson or East River!

A CAVE

The ideal cave or cavern for leaving to go to the Lower World should have some depth or mystery connected to it, such as a passageway that you have not thoroughly penetrated in ordinary reality. It is not essential to have previously entered the cave, but only to have seen its mouth in ordinary reality. This can be an advantage, for it means that what lies beyond the mouth of the cave is totally unknown to you and thus may provide an excellent transition into nonordinary reality.

Although a simple rock shelter with no deep corridors is usually a

far less satisfactory departure place than a dark cave, a journeyer can sometimes use one by entering a crack in its rock face. Since these are journeys of the spirit, even a crack an inch wide can permit access for the experienced person.

Later, in an exercise to practice journeying to the Lower World with the help of drumming, you will have the opportunity to pass into the cave opening and beyond, looking for a tunnel or tube leading downward.

One last thing about selecting a cave or cavern: try not to pick one located high on a mountain. If you do, and go downward from it, you may still be in the Middle World when you emerge. It is better to pick a cave or cavern that is only slightly, or not at all, higher than the surrounding landscape.

SELECTING YOUR DEPARTURE PLACE FOR GOING TO THE LOWER WORLD

Sit or lie down in a quiet, semidarkened room, close your eyes, and relax. Select a departure site for the Lower World and try to remember how it looked to you in ordinary reality.

After the drumming begins, seeing even a brief glimpse of your departure place when you close your eyes is adequate. Consider it a success even if it is faint and lacking color. If you cannot see the departure place even briefly, then try another site you remember, but do not get involved in extensive "shopping" for the "perfect" departure site. And it does not matter whether an opening into the earth is small or large, for these are journeys of spirit. If you are having difficulty glimpsing the place, simply wait until doing the exercises below. Having a specific mission usually makes visualization easier. Changing consciousness from the OSC to the SSC with the aid of the drumming is the start of passing the first barrier or transition zone, the one between ordinary and nonordinary reality. One has successfully passed that barrier when one begins to descend through a tunnel to the Lower World.

First Exercise: Journeying to the Lower World to Meet an Animal

In this first journey, your mission will be to go to the Lower World, asking that an animal be waiting for you there. You are not "getting" an animal, just visiting one that is willing to present itself, normally an animal that is already connected to you whether you know it or not.

First, lie or sit down with your eyes covered with a kerchief or other material. When you are ready to journey, repeat silently to yourself three times your mission, to fix it clearly in your mind. In this case, your mission is to go to the Lower World, asking that some unknown animal be waiting for you there. Do not have preconceptions about what kind of animal this will be. The animal knows who it is, and that is all that is necessary.

To the sound of the recorded drumming, or live drum (beaten by another person), go down through the entrance you have chosen, look for a downward-slanting tunnel, and traverse it until you are outdoors in the Lower World, which may appear in black-and-white or in color. Also, in your first journey, the images may seem faint. (There is more information on this transition in *The Way of the Shaman*, 1980 edition, pages 30–32.) If you use a recording, set it so that you will have a short journey for this exercise, about fifteen minutes.

As you travel downward, mentally or telepathically ask that an unknown animal be waiting for you just outside the other end of the tunnel in the Lower World. When you meet the animal, simply get acquainted with it. For now, try to avoid conversing with it, and simply enjoy its company silently. If you see the animal, which is true for most people, then see if you can also feel it. If you do not see it but sense its presence, try to see it. You may choose either to stay with it in one place or to explore a bit of the Lower World in its company.

If an animal is not waiting for you outside the end of the tunnel, journey farther out into the Lower World, still sending the mental message that you want to meet an animal.

When the call-back signal is made by the more rapid drumming, take leave of the animal, thank it for being with you, retrace your route rapidly back up the tunnel, and return to the room or place

from which you departed.

When you have returned, remove your eye covering and quietly review your journey. If possible, record the details in your notebook. If someone was beating a drum for you, you may wish to share your experience. Afterward, of course, you can reciprocate by letting your friend journey while you beat the drum.

If you were journeying alone and using recorded drumming and the simultaneous-narration technique described in Appendix A, play back your recorded narration of what happened and make notes about anything you would like to remember.

Do not be discouraged if you do not succeed in journeying this time, or have a faint journey, or do not meet an animal. Simply keep practicing this exercise until you meet an animal in the Lower World. Shamanism, like any other discipline, requires commitment and practice to achieve success. One of my students worked eight months unsuccessfully and then "broke through," thereafter often having vivid journey experiences, even in color.

Second Exercise: Divination Journeying to the Animal

Divination is often surprisingly easy if one uses the ancient methods of the shaman. As with other things in shamanism, the quality of the results depends primarily on the spirits and whether you approach them in the right ways. To prepare for this work, you will take another journey to the Lower World. This time, however, it will not be a journey simply to meet an unknown animal. Instead, you will have a very specific, limited mission using the knowledge you have already acquired on how to get to the Lower World and about the animal you have already met.

This will be the start of your use of the classic shamanic journey method for getting answers to questions by entering realms of hidden knowledge. To begin, please take a few minutes to think about the most important personal questions in your life. These should be questions with which you have struggled without obtaining a clear answer or solution.

Pick the most important of these questions. You should phrase it in a simple, clear sentence, preferably starting with one of the following words: “who,” “what,” “where,” “how,” or “why.” I do not recommend the word “when.” This is for reasons that need to be learned in more advanced training than what can be provided in this book. For more on framing questions, see this page and this page. Be sure your question is not long, complicated, or ambiguous. To remove ambiguity, eliminate the words “and” or “or” from the question. This is to prevent the sentence from having two or more questions built into it. If the sentence contains more than a single question, then the journeyer may not be able to tell which question is being answered if the animal replies symbolically.

Before journeying, write the question down in your notebook, and repeat it three times to yourself so that you will not forget it. If you are journeying with a drumming recording and headphones, and also using the simultaneous-narration method (see Appendix A, this page), it is useful to repeat the question three times into your lapel microphone at the start of the recording.

You should use the same entrance as before, into the earth or water, and follow the same tunnel route down from there to arrive in the Lower World. The only thing that will be new is your objective or mission. Your mission must always be clear in your mind both before and during a journey.

Remember your mission: to visit the animal you met in your last journey and to ask it your question. When the drumming begins, visualize your opening into the earth or water, and journey down it through the tunnel, sending down a telepathic or mental message asking the animal to be waiting for you just outside the tunnel in the Lower World.

When you meet the animal, immediately ask it your question telepathically. It may answer in the same way, or it may even speak the answer aloud in words. More often, the animal may answer by shaking or nodding its head, or by moving its body to provide the answer. In the latter case, it may not be clear what the animal is communicating until you come to understand its body language. Be

patient; additional journeys to the animal will lead to much greater understanding.

If the animal provides you immediately with an answer, then simply spend the rest of the drumming time visiting with the animal. Do not try to ask a new question, but use the opportunity to get acquainted. The animal might even take you on a brief tour of the Lower World. Just let happen whatever may occur until the drumming call-back signal sounds. Then honor the animal by telling it good-bye, and return back up to the Middle World, rapidly retracing the route you used to descend.

Although the animal commonly provides the answer immediately upon being questioned, there is one important exception. That is when the animal turns and runs away. If that happens, then run after it. The animal will lead you on a journey—showing you the answer. That is, the sights you see on the journey constitute the answer to the question. Much of the journey work of the evolving shaman consists of learning how to "read" such journeys; in other words, of learning how to read the signs or symbols one is shown.

When the journey is over and you are back in your room or other departure space, summarize in your own mind what the answer was. Then review the details of what happened, taking notes. If you have a recorder, you can also now dictate the details, unless you already did so using simultaneous narration.

Even when you make a recording of a journey, try to take notes afterward because they are much easier to consult in the future than having to play back entire recordings. If you recorded your accounts, the notes can refer to the specific recordings for later playbacks. The notes can be underlined to call attention to important communications and experiences and, if kept together in a single notebook, provide an easy way of tracking your progress. From time to time, you should review your notes, for earlier journeys that seemed unimportant or difficult to understand may gradually to reveal their significance to you.

Nothing you are shown in your journeys is really insignificant. In nonliterate cultures, where note-taking was not possible, shamans had

to discipline their memory to recall as many details of their journey as possible. To forget what the spirits told or showed them was disrespectful, and the shaman could eventually lose their continued help.

If you work a reasonable period of time in shamanism, you will discover that the advice of power animals is not only compassionate, but also often humorous. They are like good friends. At the same time, journeys are awesome, sacred experiences of immense value.

Shamanic journeying, like shamanism as a whole, is a discipline. You plan your journey mission, make the journey with a mission, and if necessary make another journey or two to clarify any remaining uncertainties. You can return at will, again and again, to obtain any information you still lack.

APPENDIX C

Resources for Training

If you wish to compare your own experiences by using the information in Appendices A and B, I suggest you use the simultaneous-narration method, described on this page, and a high-quality shamanic journey drumming recording. They are available online in digitally remastered CD and MP3 download formats from the Foundation (see contact information below).

To go farther, and if you are new to core shamanism, I highly recommend the Foundation's two-day "Basic Workshop, The Way of the Shaman," which will introduce you to experiencing both the Upper and Lower Worlds and to getting help and seeking healing. The workshop is required preparation for more advanced Foundation courses that deal with all three worlds, such as the "Two-Week Shamanic Healing Intensive," the "Three-Year Program of Advanced Initiations in Shamanism and Shamanic Healing," and many others. All the Foundation's workshops and courses are taught by a carefully selected and trained faculty with years of experience in shamanic healing and other aspects of shamanism.

"The Way of the Shaman" workshop is offered in English throughout the United States and in the following other countries: Canada (also in French in Quebec), the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. It has long been offered in other languages in other countries, starting with my 1978 teaching in Germany. You can find more information on the Foundation's website: **www.shamanism.org**.

The Foundation for Shamanic Studies can also be reached at:
P.O. Box 1939
Mill Valley, California 94942
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APPENDIX D

Core Shamanism and Healing: Information for Physicians and Health Professionals

WRITTEN WITH SANDRA HARNER, PHD

The experiences in the preceding pages, no matter how personally extraordinary and life-changing, are especially important as sources of knowledge and spirit power to help us alleviate suffering and pain in others. This chapter, written in a format especially intended for health care professionals, also introduces the general reader to some important aspects of core shamanism in connection with healing work. Core shamanism, as said earlier, consists of the universal, near-universal, and common features of shamanism, together with journeys to other worlds, a distinctive feature of shamanism. These journeys are commonly made in order to secure spiritual help, such as in healing patients.

The teaching and use of the basic principles and practices of core shamanism have encouraged the rapid revival of shamanic healing practices in the West and elsewhere. Today what has been called "core shamanism" in these pages is the dominant mode of practice of shamanism in most of the West, although various practitioners, both indigenous and Western, continue to work in the mode of one or another localized indigenous shamanic or quasi-shamanic tradition. Such culture-specific modes especially characterize indigenous practitioners serving their own native populations, as in the United

States and Canada. In that connection, it is important to note that the information in this section is intended as a brief introduction to shamanic healing practice and by no means begins to exhaust the varieties of spiritual sources of illness, and the varieties of modes of shamanic diagnosis and treatment.

By not imitating any specific cultural tradition, core shamanism is especially suited for utilization by Westerners who desire a relatively culture-free system that they can adopt and integrate into their lives. The following outline of shamanic practices focuses upon the underlying cross-cultural commonalities of shamanism known as core shamanism and does not attempt to introduce specific indigenous tribal or regional variations and elaborations.

Introductions to some of the principles and practices of core shamanism may be found in: Michael Harner's *The Way of the Shaman*[1] and "A Core Shamanic Theory of Dreams,"[2] and in publications by various of his students, such as Tom Cowan's *Shamanism as a Spiritual Practice for Daily Life*.[3] However, the most important practical teaching in both core and indigenous shamanism is not to be found in published literature, both because it has largely occurred in nonliterate cultures, and because it is done by person-to-person experientially based instruction, by example, by direct communication from the spirits, and through personal experimentation and practice. Furthermore, much of this experiential learning is ineffable or near ineffable and thus has not been easily communicated to Western anthropologists and observers. For these reasons, there will be very limited references to published literature in the following pages. Those seeking firsthand experiential training in shamanism and shamanic healing are referred to Appendix C.

PRINCIPAL CONCEPTS OF CORE SHAMANISM

This section offers a summary of the principal concepts of core shamanism and its general approach to illness and necessary interventions. The presentation is organized around how the basic concepts relate to these.

I. Assumptions about nature and humankind

II. Pathogenesis/etiology of health and illness

III. Diagnosis

IV. Therapy

V. Training and practice in core shamanism

I. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NATURE AND HUMANKIND

Shamans have long assumed that humans are part of the totality of nature, related to all other biological forms, and not superior to them. This "pagan" assumption was one of the many reasons that European shamans were persecuted by the Inquisition and that indigenous shamans elsewhere were likewise ridiculed and condemned by Western missionaries who viewed such an assumption as contrary to the Biblical account of the origin of humans. Indeed, it was not really until Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*[4] and *The Descent of Man*[5] that Westerners began, often reluctantly, to return to a general recognition of humankind's kinship to all other life forms. Even today, of course, many adherents of the major Eastern and Western religions, as a matter of faith, still balk at such recognition.

Another basic, usually implicit rather than explicit, assumption in shamanism is that there are two realities, and that the perception of each depends upon one's state of consciousness. Therefore, those in the "ordinary state of consciousness" (OSC) perceive only "ordinary reality" (OR). Those in the "shamanic state of consciousness" (SSC) are able to enter into and perceive "nonordinary reality" (NOR). These are both called realities because each is empirically encountered. Each is recognized to have its own forms of knowledge and relevance to human existence.[6]

NOR is not a consensual reality, and indeed if it were, shamanic practitioners would have no function, for it is their responsibility to perceive successfully what others do not. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the shamanic practitioner is the ability to move

back and forth at will between these realities with discipline and purpose in order to heal and help others.

A corollary assumption is that the individual beings encountered in nonordinary reality are themselves real. These are called “spirits,” and are considered real by shamanic practitioners because they interact with them firsthand. This interaction involves direct perception with all the senses. In other words, for the shamanic practitioner, the existence of spirits is not a belief but an empirical fact.[7] In NOR, shamanic practitioners routinely see, touch, smell, and hear spirits; they find them as real as the fellow humans they interact with in OR. As they work, individual practitioners discover which of the encountered beings are personal helping, or tutelary, spirits; i.e., those who provide reliable information and miraculous help in healing.

Another core assumption is that living members of all species, including humans, have souls, or lifelong personal spirits. The soul is defined as the spiritual essence of the individual required for that individual to be alive. Thus it is present from conception or birth until death, although the degree to which it is present may vary. Upon death, the soul continues to exist, as it did before birth, but the length of time it does so as an identifiable entity varies. For shamanic practitioners, souls are identifiable entities because they encounter them directly in nonordinary reality, as they do other spirits.

Research on the existence of spirits has been largely been up to shamans. Over many millennia in thousands of different cultures, independently on five different continents, they conducted countless healing experiments with their patients, often in life-and-death situations, with results that have consistently supported the theory of the reality of spirits. For this reason, the fundamentals of indigenous shamanic practice are remarkably consistent throughout the world, although due to local historical factors, portions of indigenous shamanic traditions have sometimes been modified or destroyed.

A core feature of shamanism is that the Universe is divisible into three worlds: the Upper, Middle, and Lower. The Middle World, in which we live, has both its OR and NOR (or nonspiritual and

spiritual) aspects. The Upper and Lower Worlds, in contrast, are purely spiritual and are found only in nonordinary reality, where they exist "outside of time." The shaman often makes "out-of-body" journeys to the Upper and Lower Worlds to seek assistance for healing and divination from compassionate beings there.

The core shaman's helping spirits are typically those of beings, human and nonhuman, who once lived in ordinary reality and, following death, left this Middle World and entered the NOR of the Upper and Lower Worlds. This is the same realm of divine union and love described by near-death survivors, mystical explorers in virtually all spiritual traditions, and, of course, by shamanic journeyers. These departed spirits, as they progress farther up and down from the Middle World, merge by degrees with that loving hidden universe to become beings of compassion and power.

CORE SHAMANIC ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NATURE AND HUMANKIND

Unity

Humans are part of the totality of nature, are related to all other biological forms, and are not superior to them.

Two Realities

Ordinary state of consciousness (OSC) accesses ordinary reality (OR), and shamanic state of consciousness (SSC) accesses nonordinary reality (NOR).

Universe

Three worlds: Upper World, Middle World, Lower World.

Souls

Members of all species, including humans, have souls (their personal enduring spirits).

Helping Spirits

Their existence is a real, empirical fact; a large variety of types; not all-powerful outside of NOR, but with shamanic assistance can have a significant impact in OR, as in healing matters.

Journey

A shamanic voyage into nonordinary reality, especially to the Upper and Lower Worlds, to seek assistance for healing and divination.

Departed spirits who have not yet left this Middle World normally have not achieved this compassion and power. For this and other reasons, core shamanic practitioners commonly journey to the Upper and Lower Worlds to find their spirit helpers. As they make journeys and do work for their clients, they discover which of these spiritual beings are especially successful in effecting healings. Since shamanic practitioners empirically discover their helping spirits through direct personal observation, interaction, and the testing of their powers, their helping spirits may be, or may not be, spirits who are generally worshiped by, or known to, people in the culture at large.

These compassionate helping spirits beyond this Middle World desire to alleviate suffering and pain in our world of ordinary reality (OR) for reasons that include the following: (1) they now exist merged within realms of divine love without pain; (2) having formerly lived in ordinary reality, they understand and empathize with our pain and suffering; (3) they seem to understand the extent of pain and suffering even more than we do, for they have transcended our reality and therefore can compare both; (4) they look back upon our situation and take pity on us; (5) consequently, they wish to help relieve our suffering and pain.

The compassionate spirits are known, in various forms, in virtually all human cultures. In many tribal societies, they include ancestral spirits as well as spirits of animals and plants. In Hinduism and

Christianity, for example, they may be known as saints; i.e., the spirits of saints.

Ordinary people and priests in a great range of cultures commonly appeal to these spirits by means of prayer. Although supplication through prayer can often facilitate spiritual help from the other reality and is part of shamanic practice, prayer is not usually recognized in shamanism as being as effective as shamanic two-way interaction with one or more helping spirits and bringing that help to a patient here.

For the shaman, one of the significant reasons that prayer is often of limited success is that the compassionate spirits of the Upper and Lower Worlds are not all-powerful outside the realms in which they dwell. Since their power to affect circumstances in the Middle World is limited, they characteristically need ordinary-reality allies to help create openings and passageways in order to alleviate pain and suffering. Shamans are such allies, providing through their journeys strong healing connections to the Middle World.

Consequently, the shamanic journey is a centerpiece of core shamanism, bringing both realities together to effect “impossible” (i.e., miraculous) results in alleviating suffering. The shamanic journeyer, by crossing into the other reality, contacts and often returns as an embodiment of the compassionate healing spirits. This period of interaction and unity is typically of limited duration, for great concentration in the shamanic state of consciousness is necessary to sustain it. In this state, the shamanic practitioner is not a supplicant as much as someone actively engaged with a helping spirit to alleviate the suffering and illness of a client. Through this intimate alliance, shamanic practitioners in indigenous cultures are typically expected by their peoples to produce healing results beyond those considered possible by prayer alone.

Besides the compassionate spirits of the Upper and Lower Worlds, which normally are the healing helpers of the shamanic practitioners, there are the spirits of deceased beings still dwelling in the Middle World and its interfaces with the Upper and Lower Worlds. These disembodied Middle World spirits, which are of all species, are not

only an unreliable source of compassionate help, but also are rather commonly a source of illness for those still living. Many of these spirits are confused, often unaware that they are dead, and maintaining the behaviors they had while alive. Suffering and wandering aimlessly in the Middle World, they are frequently sources of illness for the living, such as in cases of spirit intrusion and involuntary possession.

II. PATHOGENESIS/ETIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

Good health and the absence of serious injury are considered characteristic of the normal human condition, except in the case of the very elderly. Poor health, illness, and serious injury are usually due to specific spiritual and nonspiritual factors, and the task of the shamanic practitioner is to deal with the spiritual factors involved in an illness or injury.

Spiritual factors that can contribute to, or bring about, illness are of two main types: (1) those that involve a loss by the patient of a spirit important to the patient's well-being; (2) the acquisition by the patient of a spirit detrimental to the patient's well-being.

A. LOSS OF A SPIRIT IMPORTANT TO THE PATIENT'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

1. Soul loss

Also, a minor physical trauma, such as hitting one's finger with a hammer, typically effects a small amount of soul loss in the affected area (in this example, the finger). A major trauma, such as severe emotional shock or physical injury, typically results in significant soul loss. A comatose condition correlates with almost complete loss of soul, and death with a complete loss.

Soul loss commonly manifests as a "dispirited" condition, the degree of which depends upon the severity of the loss as well as the history of previous soul loss. A person who with a history of significant soul loss frequently can be characterized as "not being all there," an apt phrase that may represent an unconscious awareness in

our culture of the condition. Latin Americans consciously have the concept of soul loss in their culture, and they identify the illness by a term representing the trauma leading to soul loss: in Spanish, *susto*, or "fright." Informal unpublished surveys indicate that even non-Latino middle-class Americans, when asked, state that they believe themselves to have experienced some soul loss during their lives, even when they have never heard of the concept before.

2. Guardian spirit loss

Separate from soul loss, and very important as a factor leading to illness, is the loss of personal spiritual power—a consequence of the individual having lost the protection of a personal guardian spirit to help ward off illnesses, injuries, and adversity in general. However, even the retention of such spiritual power and protection is usually not adequate to prevent the person from becoming ill from epidemic disease.

Unlike soul loss, the loss of protective spiritual power is not usually the consequence of trauma, but rather a precondition for being vulnerable to trauma and to most serious illness, whether acute or chronic. Since the loss of this spiritual power opens the door to significant trauma, an individual who has undergone spiritual power loss becomes consequently more susceptible to soul loss.

B. ACQUISITION OF A SPIRIT DETRIMENTAL TO THE PATIENT'S WELL-BEING

A person who has significantly lost his/her personal spiritual power is especially prone to illnesses in the form of spirit intrusion. A person who, in addition, has had serious soul loss is vulnerable to involuntary spirit possession. Both conditions typically involve the acquisition of disembodied Middle World spirits detrimental to the individual's mental/emotional or physical health.

1. Spirit intrusions

When a person has lost his/her personal guardian spirit, the protective power provided by that spirit gradually ebbs away, with the result being that the individual becomes susceptible to nonordinary, or spirit, intrusions. These intrusions produce localized illness or pain.

In order for these intrusive spirits to have enough power to penetrate the body of a person, they generally must be sent by another person or persons. This can be done either consciously or unconsciously. In indigenous societies, such intrusions are commonly the result of conscious hostile spiritual acts by sorcerers. Curses or hostile spells constitute a related, but somewhat different, conscious phenomenon. In contemporary Western society, generally the spirit intrusions are sent unknowingly, for most educated Westerners are ignorant of such a possibility. While they may recognize the possibility of prayer to heal and help others, they generally have been unaware of the potentiality of negative wishes, or harmful analogues of prayer, to spiritually precipitate or worsen illness in others.[8] In other words, they are uneducated about how to prevent their own emotional states from actualizing hostile manifestations on a spiritual level.

Such manifestations can be harmful not only to the person who is the object of the hostility, but also to the knowing or unknowing sender of the injurious spiritual energies. In shamanism a kind of karmic reciprocity is recognized. More specifically, what a person sends out spiritually to others, whether with hate or compassion, will return in a like manner, but multiplied in its effects. Thus a sensible person who is shamanically trained scrupulously avoids hostile spiritual activities. To do otherwise is not only unethical, but also potentially leads to life-threatening consequences.

Intrusions, because of their localized nature in the body, tend to produce symptoms of pain, discomfort, and illness at specific loci. They may do this in concert with OR infections and injuries or independently.

2. Involuntary possessions engendering illness

When a person has not only lost his/her personal guardian spirit but also has suffered significant soul loss, then that individual becomes especially vulnerable to illness in the form of involuntary possession by a spirit. Without the protective power provided by the guardian spirit, the person becomes a somewhat unoccupied spiritual vessel due to the serious soul loss. This presents an opportunity for the soul of another person to enter and occupy the body (including the mind). When this occurs, it may properly be termed an illness engendered by involuntary spirit possession.

This condition must be distinguished from voluntary spirit possession, or spirit embodiment, which is commonly practiced by shamans and mediums (including "channelers"), and which is not an illness but a disciplined professional practice. In such voluntary spiritual possession, the practitioner has specific helping and teaching spirits (often called "guides" in mediumship or channeling) whom he or she deliberately invites to come, usually from the Upper World, to occupy his/her consciousness for a short period of time, such as in a séance.

Involuntary spirit possession connected to illness is characteristically the occupation of an individual's mind/body by spirits (souls) of deceased humans who have remained in the Middle World. Usually such spirits are those of persons who had sudden, traumatic deaths, with the result that their souls abruptly fled their bodies in a disoriented state. While these spirits retain some memory, they are most commonly confused and suffering wanderers who sometimes do not even realize that they are dead. Indeed, their attachment to living humans reinforces their personal illusion that they are still alive.

For the living person who is thus possessed, the consequences include dual identities (and if possessed by more than a single spirit, multiple identities), leading commonly to considerable confusion, the acquisition of new phobias, inappropriate social and other behavior, and general demoralization. In other words, the mental and emotional problems of the deceased can have significant deleterious

effects on the host person. For example, if the deceased was addicted to alcohol or drugs, the possessed person will tend to exhibit these same tendencies. If the possessing being is that of a sociopath, extreme antisocial behaviors may thus become manifest in the host person. It is this last type of case that has probably led to the widespread folk belief that possession is the work of an evil spirit.

III. DIAGNOSIS

Shamanic practitioners primarily rely on divination to obtain significant information about their patients' health problem. Entering the shamanic state of consciousness (SSC), they engage in diagnostic divination in two main ways, which may be employed singly or in combination to make a single diagnosis: (1) by consulting their helping spirits; (2) by shamanically "seeing" the spiritual causation of an illness.

A. CONSULTING THE HELPING SPIRITS

Through experience, shamanic practitioners learn which of their helping spirits are most successful in diagnosis and under what circumstances. These helpers are generally all-knowing observers of the Middle World, even when not resident here, and thus can provide information about each individual patient. Practitioners themselves do not need to use OR techniques such as patient history collection or laboratory analyses, although obviously the patients communicate their health problems to the practitioners at the time of their visits.

Divinatory consultations with the helping spirits occur in various ways, including these two: (1) by journeying to them; and (2) by doing object divination.

1. Consulting by means of the shamanic journey

A commonly used method for diagnosis is the divinatory shamanic journey to the Upper or Lower Worlds. This is done by practitioners asking one of their compassionate helping spirits for information

about the origin and nature of the patient's health problems. In this way, the practitioners can learn if the patient's problems involve such factors as soul loss, guardian spirit loss, spirit intrusions, and involuntary possession.

First the practitioners call for spiritual help and then enter nonordinary reality. This is done by going into the SSC, most typically with the aid of auditory driving in a range of about 3.5 to 4 Hertz, corresponding approximately to the lower range of theta EEG waves.[9] The auditory driving can be supplied by a live drum beaten by an assistant, by a rattle, or can be supplied in recorded form through headphones worn by the practitioners (such as CDs and MP3s of shamanic journey drumming available through the Foundation for Shamanic Studies). This diagnostic method is usually most effective if the patient is in the same room, but it can be done at a distance as well. Core practitioners usually do not use consciousness-changing substances to achieve the SSC, although they are well aware of their shamanic use in some indigenous societies.

While listening and journeying, the practitioners typically are in a relaxed position, lying down or sitting, in order to be able to leave an awareness of their body behind as they spiritually travel in NOR,[10] although they can also move ("dance") in both realities as they journey to the sound of the drum.

2. Consulting by means of object divination

A less frequently used method for diagnosis is object divination. In this technique, shamanic practitioners pray for assistance from their compassionate helping spirits. Then, using means such as examining a randomly selected stone, partially burning a carapace or scapula, or casting an object or objects, they visually analyze the subsequent results in the OSC according to a definite personal discipline. This personal discipline has been previously learned and developed through such means as shamanic journeying and experimentation through practice.

B. SHAMANICALLY "SEEING" THE SPIRITUAL CAUSATION OF AN ILLNESS

Another method of shamanic diagnosis is so-called "X-ray vision," especially done with the "strong" or "third" eye, to discover if any spirit intrusions are present. In this technique, practitioners enter the SSC and call their helping spirits to merge with them ("voluntary possession"). With their help, the practitioners perceive a harmful intrusion, the spiritual aspect of a localized illness or pain causing, or contributing to, harm in a patient's body. The intrusion typically presents itself to practitioners in the form of a small entity that the practitioners, through training and experience, know is harmful to the patient.[11] If the practitioners do not perceive such an intrusion, then the problem is not considered to have a localized spiritual cause. Such a diagnostic inspection, to be complete, may have to be done on several consecutive days or nights.

IV. THERAPY

Shamanic practitioners operate conceptually within a nonexclusivistic healing paradigm, seeing practice as complementary to other modalities of therapy. This holistic approach is nothing new, being also characteristic of indigenous societies, where shamans are responsible for providing the spiritual side of treatment for the community. Thus indigenous shamans may sometimes refer their patients to nonshamans in their societies who are skilled in bone setting or massage, or even to missionary doctors to provide aspirin, antibiotics, or other Western medical treatment.

Such Western medical treatments are seen by both core shamanic practitioners and by indigenous shamans as nonspiritual and, therefore, noncompetitive with, shamanic therapies. Further, indigenous shamans often view Western medical treatments as proffering symptomatic relief that does not address underlying spiritual problems of the patients. Thus, among the Salish peoples of Washington State and British Columbia, who have access to both types of treatments, the tendency often is to consider Western medical treatment as the "alternative" or "complementary" mode of healing.[12]

While it is true that shamans often supplement their spiritual

treatments with botanical remedies, such plant remedies are typically known to the community at large, and their application is normally not a distinctive aspect of shamanic practice. Contrary to the impression given in the popular Western media, many indigenous shamans, such as those of the Untsuri Shuar (Jívaro) people of the Upper Amazon, traditionally never gave plant remedies as part of their practice, leaving such treatments to nonshamans.[13]

A cornerstone ethic of the use of shamanic healing practices is to engage in treatment only at the request of the patient (in the case of minor children, at the request of a parent), for practitioners should not try to presume what is ultimately good for someone else. An underlying philosophical factor, particularly in life-threatening situations, is that the shamanic practitioners' purpose is to alleviate suffering and pain, not to keep patients alive in ordinary reality at all costs. Shamans have long since discovered through their journeys that the Middle World is the pain reality, and like many near-death survivors (among whom they often are numbered), they have discovered the love, beauty, and ecstasy awaiting one who goes beyond this Middle World. Even when a patient is unable to communicate an OR request for treatment, such as in cases of coma or stroke, the shamanic practitioner has means of establishing communication with the patient in NOR in order to discover his/her wishes.

Another cornerstone of treatment is that all successful healing systems are considered part of a holistic approach, and therefore, all productive treatment modes are seen as complementary unless they are contraindicated in specific cases. Accordingly, a dichotomy opposing "primary" and "complementary" is not employed here. The following use of the terms "primary" and "secondary" refers only to the usual optimal sequential application of treatment, since both spiritual and nonspiritual treatment should be given whenever appropriate.

1. Core Soul retrieval

A. Soul retrieval is generally most useful as a primary approach in cases of mental and emotional trauma.

Soul retrieval has the effect of restoring the portion or portions of the patient's soul that had left the patient at the time of an emotional and/or physical trauma.

B. Soul retrieval is generally most useful as a secondary approach in cases of physical trauma. Emergency nonspiritual treatment usually has priority, with soul retrieval work soon taking place as a subsequent treatment of the problem.

It is also useful in cases of dependency on alcohol and other drugs. After depossession treatment (see below), soul retrieval and guardian spirit retrieval work should be done as soon as possible to reduce the possibility of spirit repossession.

C. These treatments are recommended only when done by a qualified shamanic practitioner trained in core soul retrieval.

D. The shamanic practitioner should be careful not to share with the patient what the practitioner saw or experienced in an altered state while doing soul retrieval. This is one of the distinctive features of the core methodology of soul retrieval.[14] Disclosures to the patient of the practitioner's personal visionary experiences in the shamanic state of consciousness are contraindicated, just as they are with regard to the practitioner's visionary experiences in encountering spirit intrusions in a patient.

2. Spirit depossession

A. Spirit depossession, as a primary approach, is generally most useful in the following situations:

Cases of dependency on alcohol and other drugs

Spirit depossession work is very useful as a primary approach in treating alcohol and drug addiction problems. For such treatment to be successful, the patient (1) must be committed to

giving up the dependency; and (2) must have abstained from the abused substance for an adequate period of time (ideally at least 72 hours) before undergoing the shamanic treatment. Repeated treatments may be necessary over a period of weeks.

Cases of mental and emotional illness

Mental and emotional illnesses, ranging from neurotic to psychotic, usually have a significant spiritual component. Most commonly, this involves varying degrees of possession by one or more deceased humans whose consciousness has intruded into that of the patient and altered the patient's behavior. Often these spirits are under the delusion that they are still alive and therefore confuse their identities with those of the patient. In other cases, they are aware that they are deceased and are consciously choosing to continue to act out their usual behavior through the person into whom they have intruded. For depossession treatment to be successful, the patient (1) must be seriously committed to the treatment, and (2) must not be under the influence of sedating or other mood-changing medication. Repeated treatments may be necessary over a period of months.[15]

B. Spirit depossession is usually most useful as a secondary approach in the following situations:

Cases of dependency on alcohol and other drugs

In situations where emergency and supportive medical procedures are necessary to help the patient arrive at a drug-free condition for at least 72 hours, then the shamanic treatment must be considered secondary in sequence, since depossession work cannot normally be successful without that precondition being met.

Cases of mental and emotional illness

When the patient is hysterical or having a psychotic episode, normal emergency psychotherapeutic procedures may have to take priority, with the depossession work secondary in sequence,

and after the conditions outlined in section A have been met.

C. These treatments are recommended only when done by a qualified shamanic practitioner.

D. There are no contraindications except for the qualifiers indicated above.

3. Guardian spirit retrieval

A. Guardian spirit retrieval is generally most useful as a primary approach in cases of chronic "dispiritedness" and depression, and in cases of chronic illness unresponsive to nonspiritual treatment. It is also useful as a primary approach in helping patients to cope with chronic adversity in their lives. Maximum effectiveness in guardian spirit retrieval is usually achieved by employing it in conjunction with soul retrieval.

The purpose of guardian spirit retrieval is to restore spiritual power to patients to assist them in resisting current mental and physical illness, to help them heal injuries, and to reduce the probability of future illness and trauma. The common secondary effects of the resultant spiritual empowerments include a greater sense of well-being (also true of soul retrieval), increased self-confidence and success in achieving personal goals, and a more ethical approach to life.

Some of the basics of guardian spirit retrieval are outlined in *The Way of the Shaman* as "power animal" retrieval.[16] Although the retrieval of an animal guardian spirit is the most common form, anthropomorphic and other guardian spirits may be retrieved as well, using the same basic methods.

B. Guardian spirit retrieval is generally most useful as a secondary approach after one or more of the these types of treatments: (1) soul retrieval; (2) spirit-intrusion extraction (to be discussed); (3) depossession.

Guardian spirit retrieval is especially indicated immediately after depossession and spirit-intrusion extraction treatments to

help fill the void left by the removal of the unwanted entities and thereby reduce the probability of a reentry by a possessing spirit or spirit intrusion. It should also be done after soul retrievals to help empower the patients to keep the retrieved soul parts and, in their recuperative situation, to protect them from recurring spirit possessions as well as intrusions.

C. These treatments are recommended only when done by a qualified shamanic practitioner.

D. There are no contraindications for guardian spirit retrieval.

4. Spirit-intrusion extraction

A. Spirit-intrusion extraction is generally most useful as a primary approach in cases of chronic localized pain or illness which have not responded adequately to ordinary-reality medical treatment and which have been shamanically diagnosed as having the involvement of a spirit intrusion. The localized nature of intrusions usually distinguishes them from possession illness.

The shamanic extraction of harmful spirit intrusions is a noninvasive method of removing the spiritual aspect of pain and/or illness from specific locations in the patient's body. At no time in this treatment is the skin penetrated in OR terms, nor does the practitioner describe to the patient the NOR appearance of the intrusions. In extraction work, shamanic practitioners merge with their helping spirits to facilitate healing in both nonordinary and ordinary reality simultaneously. Two main techniques exist: (1) using the hands to pull the intrusions out of the patients; and (2) sucking out the intrusions.[17] Both techniques are widely used in indigenous shamanism, but the latter one, because of its exotic appearance, is usually not employed with Westerners. It is desirable to repeat extraction treatments several days in a row. Recommended immediate follow-up treatment includes core soul retrievals and guardian spirit retrievals.

B. Spirit-intrusion extraction is generally most useful as a secondary

approach in cases of acute localized pain or illness which, after nonspiritual medical treatment, continue to manifest significant symptomology.

C. These treatments are recommended only when done by a qualified shamanic practitioner.

D. There are no contraindications except for previously discussed general qualifiers to shamanic treatment.

V. TRAINING AND PRACTICE IN CORE SHAMANISM

I. TRAINING

A. Prerequisites and requirements

To become a shamanic practitioner, one should be a mature, emotionally stable adult of compassion and intelligence who wishes to alleviate suffering and pain. Beyond this, the person should be able to journey into NOR with discipline and to contact his/her spirit helpers without supervision. Formal training in Western medicine and psychotherapy is not necessary or particularly relevant.

B. Curriculum components

Once one has learned to journey in NOR beyond the Middle World, all the training can be obtained, usually through many years of work, from helping (tutelary) spirits. Remarkably, regardless of culture, the instruction by the healing spirits is basically the same; this is a major reason shamanism is recognizable as a worldwide system. In some indigenous cultures, the shamanic trainees learn experientially largely from the spirits; in others, they learn key healing methods from existing shamans and then add to this basic knowledge experientially through practice and studying with their helping spirits, as during journeys. It is this latter approach which characterizes training in core shamanism.

Thorough training to become a core shamanic practitioner involves experiential study, both in OR and NOR, of such subjects

as:

1. Entering and exiting the shamanic state of consciousness with discipline and purpose to journey into NOR outside the Middle World and also to perceive NOR in the Middle World as necessary.
2. Shamanic journeying to the Upper and Lower Worlds, including discovering and mapping the levels in each, as well as journeying in the Middle World, aided by auditory driving. Such journeying includes discovering and working with one's own tutelary spirits.
3. Divination (including shamanic diagnosis).
4. Guardian spirit retrieval.
5. Shamanic-extraction healing.
6. Core soul retrieval.
7. Spiritual dismemberment and rememberment.
8. Voluntary spirit possession or embodiment for healing work.
9. Depossession healing work.
10. Psychopomp work (alleviating the suffering of the dying and the deceased; if skilled enough, "escorting" souls to the next world).
11. Any and all teachings obtained experientially from one's tutelary spirits.

C. Duration and training requirements

It is inappropriate to imply that there is a specific duration for training because shamanic practitioner training depends on a variety of factors, not the least of which is the pace at which tutelary spirits feel it is appropriate to progressively teach the trainee ineffable aspects of shamanic education. Indeed, it may accurately be said that even the most advanced shaman or

shamanic practitioner is perpetually in training. Nonetheless, it can be noted that some Westerners become effective shamanic healing practitioners within four to eight years. This involves not only the help of the tutelary spirits, but also specific and thorough experiential training and practice in the subjects listed above.

At the present time, such extensive and reliable preparation is available through the educational programs of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies (a nonprofit charitable and educational institution headquartered in Northern California), which has pioneered this training both in North America and overseas. The courses of the Foundation last as long as three years, with prior training a prerequisite. Screening of applicants is conducted before admission to major advanced courses. No degrees are given.[18]

II. QUALITY ASSURANCE

A. Licensure and certification

As with shamans in indigenous societies, shamanic practitioners in the West are not, and cannot, be certified as healers for the simple reason that their helping spirits can abandon them at any time, and without their help, successful shamanic healing work is not possible. Accordingly, shamanic practitioners cannot be certified nor licensed. Recognition can be given for the amount of training they have received in OR—for example, from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies—but this should not be confused with their actual success record in shamanic healing work.

In indigenous societies, the reputation of shamans as successful healers is passed by word of mouth and depends on their current reported success rates, for spiritual power can be lost by even the best of shamanic healers. The Foundation for Shamanic Studies (www.shamanism.org) annually publishes in its journal, *Shamanism*, an international telephone directory, by community,

of those involved to varying degrees with its work. As in indigenous villages, one can thus canvass others locally and obtain recommendations.

Although no longer doing so, the Foundation has in the past provided certification as Harner Shamanic Counselors. HSC is not healing work, and the certified shamanic counselors may or may not be maintaining healing practices in addition to their counseling work. At present, the Foundation provides evidence that a student has completed a training course in Harner Shamanic Counseling. Regarding healing work, the Foundation does refer inquiries to knowledgeable faculty members who, as individuals, may have personal recommendations regarding currently successful shamanic practitioners their localities.[19]

Unfortunately, in contemporary Western society there are many unqualified persons claiming to be shamans or proficient in shamanism and shamanic healing. This situation is not unknown in non-Western societies, but in those societies, community consensus and personal recommendations are the sources of information in finding shamanic practitioners with reputations for recent healing successes. However, even in those cases, shamanic practitioners can lose the support of their helping spirits at any time and therefore no longer be able to heal.

B. Legal status and regulation

In the United States, there are no laws, statutes, or governmental regulations pertaining explicitly to shamanic practice, as such, known to the authors as of this writing. However, there often are local ordinances that broadly outlaw spiritual healing and divination as well as similar rules and regulations of professional medical, psychiatric, and psychological associations. Outside the United States, in countries with state-sponsored religions, shamanic healing practices sometimes are illegal.

C. Continuing education

Continuing education is done primarily by the tutelary spirits and by the experiences of one’s healing practice.

III. RELATIONS WITH CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

Physicians and psychotherapists who have come to understand the value of shamanic practices through firsthand experiential training and personal experimentation commonly wish to add such practices as a spiritual dimension of their own work or to refer patients to shamanic practitioners for complementary treatment. However, psychotherapists need to recognize that shamanism differs radically from Western psychotherapy in that shamanism operates on the basis of the reality of spirits. Also, in the United States, for example, health professionals tend to be inhibited from attempting to use shamanism due to governmental laws and regulations and professional organizations that prohibit them from practicing spiritual healing or even making referrals to spiritual practitioners.

Such generalized conventional distrust of spiritual treatment needs to be replaced with specific knowledge about particular modes of practice and their possible complementarity. In the interests of developing such knowledge, significant support is needed for clinical studies of the effectiveness of shamanic practices. Only by taking seriously the most time-tested system of mind/body/spirit healing known to humanity can holistically oriented policies emerge that do not blindly forbid the nonexclusive treating of the spiritual aspects of illness and injury.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

Despite all obstacles, core shamanic healing practices are becoming increasingly embraced and utilized by ever-larger numbers of people in all walks of life, both as practitioners and patients. In addition, indigenous shamanism is undergoing a revival worldwide in connection with a decline of missionization, colonialism, and authoritarian governments, and the reemergence of local ethnic pride and indigenous nationalism.

There is every indication that, worldwide, the shamanic treatment of illness is going to become ever more important as it demonstrates its practical healing results, just as it has done for thousands of years cross-culturally. In our opinion, the West has begun a major paradigm

shift from a conventionally ethnocentric and exclusionary health treatment to a comprehensive approach that includes shamanism as a spiritual complement to nonspiritual healing practices.

Adapted from “Core Practices in the Shamanic Treatment of Illness.” *Shamanism* (2000), Vol. 13, Nos. 1 & 2 (combined issue), pp. 19–30, by Michael Harner, PhD, and Sandra Harner, PhD.

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NOTES

A reminder: The acronyms MONOR and UMR refer, respectively, to the Mapping of Nonordinary Reality (MONOR) project of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies and "unpublished MONOR reports" (UMR). This project involves collecting and archiving shamanic knowledge, including almost five thousand reports by Westerners about what they found in their shamanic journeys into nonordinary reality, which have been used as the main source for this book's accounts.

INTRODUCTION

1. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 135.
2. M. Harner, *The Way of Shaman*, 31.
3. In a recent anthropological journal, it was said that I left anthropology when I "entered the 'real' world of the Shuar," formerly called the "Jívaro." (See Rubenstein, "On the Importance of Visions among the Amazonian Shuar.") However, I never left anthropology, only academia, in order to expand the boundaries of anthropology and knowledge.
4. At present the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory is closed to nonstaff until funds are found for a librarian.
5. Speaking of scholarship, those readers familiar with my research on ecological and economic factors involved in human social evolution (e.g., M. Harner, "Population Pressure and the Social Revolution of Agriculturalists") may wonder how I can reconcile these topics with my research on shamanism. The answer is simple: I do not need to reconcile them, for they deal with two different realities, ordinary and nonordinary. The two realities sometimes can overlap, such as in healing and gaining wisdom,

and that gives me hope for our planet's future. I see the two pursuits as complementary and necessary for the advancement of human knowledge and the survival of life on Earth.

6. E.g., Cowan 1996; Ingerman 2004.

1. SPIRIT POWER AND THE CAVE

1. de Angulo, "The Background of Religious Feeling," 354.
2. M. Harner, "Tribal Wisdom," 163. "Hearing voices" is not the same as visual perception and is not a recommended beginning path to shamanism.
3. Benedict, "The Concept of the Guardian Spirit."
4. Cline, "Religion and World View," 139.
5. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 10–16.
6. Cline, "Religion and World View," 133–82.
7. Ibid., 137–42.
8. Ibid., 138.
9. Park, "Paviotso Shamanism," 98; and *Shamanism in Western North America*, 26–29.
10. Park, *Shamanism in Western North America*, 28.
11. Ibid., 27.
12. Raymond Hoferer, the late Paviotso Ghost Dance Chief of the Walker River people, told me in May 2006 that the cave power quest is no longer practiced.
13. Park, *Shamanism in Western North America*, 27.
14. M. Harner, "Wounded Knee," 1973.
15. At no point during the cave quest did I experience seeing phosphenes or any imagery other than the appearance of Elieth as described.
16. For more details about some spirits in our world, see Chapter 4.

2. WE EXIST! THE SPIRITS CALL FOR RECOGNITION

1. During a presentation by Michael Harner at the annual meeting of the Transpersonal Psychology Association, Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, California. Anonymous, August 1993.
2. Personal communication, Dr. William H. Wilson, August 2, 2012, August 2, 2012, facilitated by the kind offices of Dr. Leanne Hinton.
3. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
4. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
5. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009. At the "Three-Year Program of Advanced Initiations in Shamanism & Shamanic Healing," Amanda Foulger, 2008.
6. Ken Emerson, April 2011, UMR.

3. THE SEARCH

1. Narby and Huxley, *Shamans through Time*.
2. Cf. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, xvi.
3. Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales*. See also Lowie, *The History of Ethnological Theory*, 216–21.
4. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness*.
5. Devereux, "Shamans as Neurotics," 12. See also Silverman, "Shamans and acute schizophrenia."
6. La Barre, *Ghost Dance*.
7. Jung, *The Red Book*, 249 n. 161.
8. Ibid., 246, 249. I am indebted to Kevin Turner for calling this passage to my attention.
9. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 306.
10. For information on Cushing, see Green, *Zuni: Selected Writings of Frank Hamilton Cushing*.
11. For more information, see M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 1–6.

12. Ibid., 84, 90–91, 134–35 passim.
13. In a later stay with the Shuar, I had the fortune to experience the acquisition of spirit power with the aid of powerful plants at a sacred waterfall, as recounted in *The Way of the Shaman*.
14. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 1–8.
15. Dick Kendig is deceased, but Dorothy survives and has given me permission to use their real names.
16. At that time I had not heard of William Burroughs's experiments with *yagé*, the Colombian name for ayahuasca. See Burroughs and Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters*, 1963.
17. For more information, see M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, xiii–xvi, 46–51.
18. I revisited them in 1964, 1969, and 1973. Some of the results are recounted in M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 8–18.
19. M. Harner, "The Role of Hallucinogenic Plants in European Witchcraft."
20. Wasson and Heim, *Les champignons hallucinogènes du Mexique*.
21. Hofmann, *LSD: My Problem Child*.
22. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*.
23. See Metzner, *Birth of a Psychedelic Culture*.
24. For example, Wasson and Heim, *Les champignons hallucinogènes du Mexique*.
25. For example, Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan*.
26. Wasson and Wasson, *Mushrooms, Russia, and History*.
27. A foot drum usually consists of board planks covering a hole in the ground, act ing as a resonance chamber. Usually up to three persons can simultaneously dance and drum on it.
28. Bogoras, "The Chuckchee-Religion," 424.
29. Personal observation and participation, 1994 and 1999.
30. See Neher, "Auditory Driving"; M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 31, 50–53; Max field, *Effects of Rhythmic Drumming;* and

Turow, “Auditory Driving as a Ritual Technology.”

31. For example, view Heick and Mueller, *The Sucking Doctor*, cited in the bibliography.
32. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
33. Cf. Ridington, *Trail to Heaven*.
34. Notably among the Amur River peoples of eastern Siberia. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
35. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
36. Mänchen-Helfen, *Reise ins asiatische Tuwa*, 117.
37. Personal communication from a Mongolian shaman, 2012.
38. Personal communication, Ailo Gaup, 1993.
39. For example, see M. Harner, ed., *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*.
40. Neher, “Auditory Driving.”
41. Neher, “A Physiological Explanation.” See also Neher, “Auditory Driving.”
42. Jilek, *Salish Indian Mental Health and Culture Change*, 74–75.
43. Rouget, *Music and Trance;* Turow, “Auditory Driving as a Ritual Technology.”
44. For example, S. Harner, *Immune and Affect Response to Shamanic Drumming;* S. Harner and Tryon, “Psychoimmunological Effects of Shamanic Drumming”; Maxfield, “The Journey of the Drum.”
45. See Townsend, “Individualist Religious Movements.”

4. OUR WORLD: SHAMANS AND SPIRITS

1. Ballard, “Mythology of Southern Puget Sound,” 129.
2. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 5.
3. For more information on states of consciousness, ordinary and

nonordinary reality, and shamanism, see M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*.

4. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 85.
5. Baer and Snell, "An Ayahuasca Ceremony among the Matsigenka," 61, 70.
6. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (1977), 85.
7. Park, "Paviotso Shamanism," 103.
8. M. Harner, "The Sound of Rushing Water," 28; M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 115–30.
9. Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, 113.
10. For example, Bogoras, "The Chukchee-Religion," 374, 413.
11. For example, Popov, "Sereptie Djarouskin of the Nganasans."
12. For example, Peri and Wharton, "Sucking Doctor," 30, 34.
13. Thalbitzer, "The Heathen Priests of East Greenland," 3.
14. M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 116–25, 154.
15. M. Harner, field notes, 1960–61.
16. Cf. Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*.
17. Wallace, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (1896).
18. Gayton, "Yokuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans," 390.
19. M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 134–43.
20. M. Harner, "A Possible Survival of Celtic Shamanism in Ireland," 3, 9.
21. For example, M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 157–60.
22. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
23. M. Harner, "A Core Shamanic Theory of Dreams," *Shamanism* 2010: 3.

1. See also Eliade, *Shamanism*, 259ff.
2. See also Eliade, *Shamanism*, 269ff.
3. Bogoras, "Ideas of Space and Time in the Conception of Primitive Religion," 235.
4. Ibid., 205–265.
5. Few ethnographers obtained firsthand descriptions from indigenous shamans regarding what they had just experienced when journeying. The task to find such cases remains challenging and requires a massive project in itself.
6. Please see the Acknowledgments section.
7. A diligent effort was made to locate the writers of the journey accounts to obtain permission to publish them here, and to give their names. If someone was overlooked or could not be found, please advise the Executive Director of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies so that future printings of this book can be changed if necessary. Alternatively, a person's report can be eliminated from future printings of the book if requested. The email address of the Foundation is info@shamanism.org.

6. THE WESTERNERS' FIRST JOURNEYS: THE LOWER WORLD AND POWER ANIMALS

1. Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, 119.
2. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 71–72, 93.
3. Ibid., 57–68.
4. For background regarding them in Native North America, see Benedict, "The Concept of the Guardian Spirit in North America."
5. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 58.
6. For example, M. Harner, "The Sound of Rushing Water" and *The Way of the Shaman*.
7. The perfume to which they were referring came from little bags of sweet smelling seeds that they hung around their necks.

8. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 76–103.
9. Ibid., 24–38.
10. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 158–61.
11. Personal communication, Bill Graves, Pomo shaman, Upper Lake, California. 1952.
12. Since we are using auditory driving, not ayahuasca, do not expect to encounter its characteristic reptilian forms I mention elsewhere (such as M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 6–7). Those forms tend to be part of the effects of ayahuasca. When the potion is strong and properly prepared, drinkers often see reptiles and felines in the Middle and Lower World. (See M. Harner, "Common Themes in South American Indian Yagé Experiences" and Naranjo, "Psychological Aspects of the Yagé Experience.") This does not seem to be typical of journeyers using auditory driving.
13. No name, no date. UMR.
14. No name, no date. UMR.
15. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 94.
16. No name, no date. UMR.
17. Anonymous, August 16, 1988. UMR.
18. Beveridge, *The Art of Scientific Investigation*.

7. SHAMANIC ASCENSION: HISTORY, FOLKLORE, AND KNOWLEDGE

1. Adaptation by Cloutier, *Spirit, Spirit*, 61–63. Reprinted by permission, Copper Beech Press, © 1980 by David Cloutier.
2. M. Harner, "The Role of Hallucinogenic Plants in European Witchcraft."
3. For example, Manker, "Die lappische Zaubertrommel, II," 19ff., 61ff., 124ff.
4. On both these trips I was accompanied by the late Heimo Lappalainen (a Finnish ethnologist and friend who acted as interpreter), and on one of them, also by my wife, Sandra Harner.

5. After great difficulty, we found one individual in northern Norway during the early 1980s who agreed to make a classic Sami "bowl" drum with a painted cosmological skin head, with its reindeer antler divination "hammer" and bone pointer, along with instructions on its use. Another type of Sami drum from northern Finland was acquired in 2012. Great secrecy regarding the identity of the drum makers was required in both cases. One of the two drums is kept in the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies in Marin County, California. The other is in a private collection.
6. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
7. Ibid.
8. Personal communications from Ulchi and Nanai shamans of the lower Amur River region of southeastern Siberia while visiting Seattle, Washington, 1996.
9. Personal communication, Vladimir Basilov, Moscow, 1982.
10. See also Walsh, *The World of Shamanism*, 157–64.
11. Except where it lingered a while among the Sami, as noted on page 98–101.
12. For example, Wilbert, "Tobacco and Shamanistic Ecstasy," 63.
13. Schröder, "Zur Religion der Tujen des Sininggebietes," 225.
14. M. Harner, "The Role of Hallucinogenic Plants in European Witchcraft."
15. Ibid., 144.
16. Bogoras, "The Chukchee-Religion," 331.
17. Ibid.
18. See the Sami drum in Plate 6 that shows a figure (a god or shaman) on a sled pulled by a reindeer. While the Sami probably had a role in the origins of the Santa Claus myth, there seems little support for recent popular assertions that the Sami used the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom to make their shamanic journeys. A

Sami shaman I have known for years told me in 2012 that he knew of no historical or traditional information indicating the Sami use of the mushrooms for shamanic journeying, although he said it was known that they used them in other shamanic rituals. He prefers to remain anonymous.

19. Irving, *A History of New York*, 81.
20. For example, Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts," 85–89, 93, 96.
21. Bacigalupo, *Shamans of the* Foye *Tree*.
22. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
23. For example, Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts," 85–89, 93, 96; Partanen, "A description of Buriat Shamanism."
24. Cf. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 259–66, 269–74.
25. Harva, "Der Baum des Lebens," 41, 57; Harva, "Finno-Urgic [and] Siberian Mythology," 341; Harva, "Die religiösen Vorstellungen," 58ff.
26. Polomé, "Germanic Religion," 524–25; see also Harva above.
27. For example, Eriksson, "Saami Shamanism"; M. Harner, "The Role of Hallucinogenic Plants in European Witchcraft"; Rydving, *The End of Drum-Time*, 56–92.
28. See Baer and Snell, "An Ayahuasca Ceremony."
29. Personal communication, Dr. Batbayar Conchidorj, Mongolian National University, 2008.
30. Polomé, "Germanic Religion," 525.
31. Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts," 86.
32. For example, Birlea, "Folklore," 365.
33. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
34. G. Turner, *Samoa*, 199.
35. Harva, "Der Baum des Lebens," 41, 57; Harva, "Finno-Urgic [and] Siberian Mythology," 341; Harva, "Die religiösen Vorstellungen,"

58ff.

36. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 409.
37. See Roerich, *Shambhala*.
38. Ibid.
39. Goldman, “The Cubeo.”
40. Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion*, 970. Today, there is widespread use of this song, with a new melody, to honor the Ghost Dance prophet Wovoka, with a word changed: “Wearing *my* long wing feathers as I fly.”
41. Bogoras, “The Chukchee-Religion,” 331.
42. Räsänen, “Regenbogen-Himmelsbrücke.”
43. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 118, 132–43.
44. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (1945), 139–40.

8. DRUMMING OVER THE RAINBOW: WESTERNERS ASCEND TO THE UPPER WORLD

1. Transcribed by Mongush Kenin-Lopsan. Kenin-Lopsan, *Calling the Bear Spirit*, 24.
2. Odigan, *Chosen by the Spirits*, 132.
3. Personal communications with Tuvan shamans and Foundation for Shamanic Studies field-workers in Tuva, including those of FSS Europa, 1994–2010.
4. Ridington, *Trail to Heaven*.
5. Bacigalupo, *Shamans of the* Foye *Tree*.
6. See M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 50–53, for details regarding the drumbeat.
7. E. Turner, “The Reality of Spirits,” 29. After contemplating her experiences during the ascension, she realized that the spirits were teaching her that they were real, not a creation of her imagination.
8. Drury, *The Elements of Shamanism*, viii–ix.

9. Ibid., ix.
10. No name, no date. UMR.
11. Personal report, Bradford Keeney, PhD, February 2, 2007.
12. Scott Balderson, June 1992. UMR.
13. Julia Meredith, November 19, 1984. UMR.
14. Kappy Strahan, October 14–19, 2001. UMR.
15. Anonymous, 1995–98. UMR.
16. For example, Bogoras, "The Chukchee-Religion," 331; Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (1945), 86.
17. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* (1945), and Howitt, *Native Tribes*, 501ff.
18. See M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 23, 109–12.
19. No name, no date. UMR.
20. The patented device is kept at the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.
21. E. Pierson, 1995. UMR.
22. Anonymous, 1999–2002. UMR.
23. Catherine Rose, May 5–17, 2000. UMR.
24. No name, no date. UMR.
25. Sally Cantrell, 2011. UMR.
26. Irene Lo, October 14, 2001. UMR.
27. Anonymous, no date. UMR.
28. Lora Jansson, October 21, 2002. UMR.
29. Datch Baudisch, October 28–November 2, 2001. UMR.
30. Katia Bask, 1998. UMR.
31. Nancy Dunn, 2000. UMR.
32. Marcia Herman, June 4, 1996. UMR.
33. Joana Morris, October 1998. UMR.

9. TEACHERS—COMPASSIONATE SPIRITS WHO ADVISE

1. Ridington, *Trail to Heaven*, 93.
2. Popov, "Sereptie Djarouskin of the Nganasans," 141.
3. Sharon Kehoe, 1987. UMR.
4. Karrie Sawyer, 1992. UMR.
5. No name, no date. UMR.
6. No name, no date. UMR.
7. No name, no date. UMR.
8. No name, no date. UMR.
9. No name, no date. UMR.
10. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 93ff., 96ff.
11. No name, no date. UMR.

10. TEACHERS—COMPASSIONATE SPIRITS WHO HEAL

1. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 113–34.
2. For example, Achterberg, *Imagery in Healing*.
3. Ozmo Piedmont, November 19, 1990. UMR.
4. Anonymous, no date. UMR.
5. Diane Polasky, October 27–28, 1990. UMR.
6. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 110.
7. No name, no date. UMR.
8. For more information, see M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 113–30.
9. For example, see Eliade, *Shamanism*, 202.
10. No name, no date. UMR.
11. Anonymous, November 2, 1993. UMR.
12. Jim Nourse, May 14, 1985. UMR.
13. Anonymous, November 23, 1992. UMR.

1. For example, see Eliade, *Shamanism*, 36ff; 53ff.
2. Popov, "Sereptie Djarouskin of the Nganasans," 84–95.
3. No name, August 1987. UMR.
4. M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 143; M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
5. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 21.
6. M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 138.
7. Rasmussen, *Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos*, 112.
8. Ibid., 118–19.
9. Peters, "Mystical Experience in Tamang Shamanism."
10. For example, see Elkin, *Aboriginal Men* (1977), 49–50.
11. Métraux, "Le shamanisme chez les indiens," 216.
12. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009. Among the Reindeer Inuit, I found that quartz crystals were unknown and therefore not part of the shamans' practice.
13. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men* (1945), 94.
14. Ibid., 85.
15. Ksenofontov, *Legendy i Rasskazy u Yakutov*, 44–95, cited in Eliade, *Shamanism*, 37.
16. Spencer and Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 480–81.
17. Ibid., 487–88.
18. Berndt, "Wuradjeri Magic and Clever Men" (1946), 334–38.
19. Eliade, *Shamanism*, 138.
20. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009; Elkin, *Aboriginal Men* (1945), 44, 103, 120.
21. Nicolina Halvorson, August 17, 1988. UMR.
22. Spencer and Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 480–

81.

23. Rasmussen, *The Intellectual Culture of Iglulik Eskimos*.
24. Mujiba Cabugos, August 21, 1987. UMR.
25. Personal communication, Larry Peters, August 13, 2001. For background information on Tamang shamanism, see Peters, "Mystical Experience in Tamang Shamanism."
26. See Evans-Wentz (ed.), *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, 277–334.
27. Anonymous, June 6, 2007. UMR.
28. Tom Snell, October 21, 2002. UMR.
29. Catherine Rose, November 1999. UMR.
30. Darla Barclay, May 5–10, 2002. UMR.
31. Robbie Staufer, October 12–16, 2007. UMR.
32. Kim Roseland, October 21–26, 2007. UMR.
33. Quasha, "Speech by Essie Parish."

12. SPIRITS, HEAVENS, AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

1. Kant, *Vorlesungen über Psychologie*, 132. See also M. Harner, "Science, Spirits, and Core Shamanism."
2. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 63, 68–69.
3. While his book first appeared in 1874, it was followed by other editions, the last one being published in 1896.
4. Wallace, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (1896), xvi.
5. Bush, "Distressing Western Near-Death Experiences," 81.
6. Tart, "Dialogue with Michael Harner" transcript, 4.
7. Ibid.

8 Ibid., 5.

9. For example, Grof, *When the Impossible Happens*. Stanislav Grof devotes this innovative book to accounts of various "impossible" phenomena he has witnessed and views as synchronicities.

10. I first wrote about my experiments regarding the unbound shaman phenomenon in 1999 (M. Harner, "Science, Spirits, and Core Shamanism"). Until 2003, I taught only the very most advanced students this skill. I had discovered that the tighter the bindings, the easier it was to get free—in my view because the spirits were likely to feel compassion proportional to the suffering of the person asking for their help. At that time I also shared the discovery with anthropologist Bill Lyon, a student of the *yuwipi* practice.
11. *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*.
12. Walsh, *The World of Shamanism*, 157–64. Also, M. Harner, "Unpublished Lectures in Shamanism," 1990 and subsequent years.
13. No name, March 17, 1985. UMR.
14. No name, August 26, 1982. UMR.
15. Rob Ashby, 2000. UMR.
16. Terry Jackson, June 13, 1988. UMR.
17. Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 16 (Index), 278.
18. Ibid., vol. 11, 188.
19. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle*, 7.
20. Ibid., 40.
21. Harva, "Die religiösen Vorstellungen," 172.
22. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle*, 22–24.
23. Ibid., 7 passim. On page 7, Widengren notes that use of the word "book" instead of "tablet" was occurring "perhaps when tablets were becoming obsolete as vehicles of writing."
24. No name, July 2, 1981. UMR.
25. Pamela Sampel, 2000. UMR.
26. No name, January 1983. UMR.
27. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle*, 80, 80 n. 4, 84.
28. Sandra Bundy, 2008. UMR.

29. Personal communications, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

AFTERWORD: THE CAVE AGAIN

1. Cline, “Religion and World View,” 137.
2. Ibid., 148.
3. Ibid., 143.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 138 passim, 144.
6. Ibid., 138.
7. Ibid., 136, 138.
8. Guthrie, *The Nature of Paleolithic Art*, 128ff.
9. Duday and Garcia, “L’ichnologie ou la mémorie des roches,” 64.

APPENDIX B: VISITING THE LOWER WORLD TO COMPARE EXPERIENCES

1. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 24–38.
2. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
3. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 25.
4. Ibid., 25–26.

APPENDIX D: CORE SHAMANISM AND HEALING: INFORMATION FOR PHYSICIANS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

The summary presented in this appendix was adapted from “Core Practices in the Shamanic Treatment of Illness,” *Shamanism* (2000), vol. 13, nos. 1 & 2 (combined issue), 19–30, by Michael Harner, PhD, and Sandra Harner, PhD.

1. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*.
2. M. Harner, “A Core Shamanic Theory.”

3. Cowan, *Shamanism as a Spiritual Practice*.
4. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*.
5. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*.
6. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, xix–xxii, 21–22.
7. E. Turner, "The Reality of Spirits," 28–32.
8. Dossey, *Healing Words*, 150–55.
9. For example, see Neher, "Auditory Driving" and "A Physiological Explanation;" Maxfield, "Effects of Rhythmic Drumming" and "The Journey of the Drum;" S. Harner, *Immune and Affect Response;* and S. Harner and W. Tryon, "Psychoimmunological Effects," 196–204.
10. For example, M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 31.
11. Ibid., 116–18.
12. M. Harner, Unpublished field, experiential, and case data, 1952–2009.
13. M. Harner, *The Jívaro*, 155.
14. These views on soul retrieval for Westerners evolved during the past decade and led to the development of core soul retrieval. Its methodology differs from that given in Ingerman, *Soul Retrieval*, and necessitates specific training.
15. M. Harner, Unpublished Lectures in Shamanism, 1978–2011.
16. M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 69–72.
17. For the sucking extraction technique, see M. Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, 113–30.
18. The Foundation's address is P.O. Box 1939, Mill Valley, California 94942; info@shamanism.org; www.shamanism.org.
19. See note 24.

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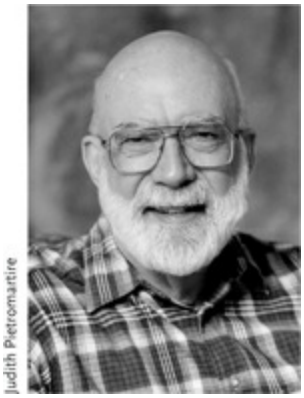
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Internationally renowned anthropologist Michael Harner pioneered the return of shamanism to the West and is the originator of core shamanism, a methodology founded on practices and principles shared by shamans across cultures worldwide. In 1979, he and his wife, Sandra Harner, established the Center for Shamanic Studies (which later became the nonprofit Foundation for Shamanic Studies) in order to return the lost knowledge of shamanism to contemporary life and to preserve the knowledge still practiced by remaining indigenous shamans. Harner has practiced shamanism since 1961, and the famed Siberian Buryat shaman Bo Bair Rinchinov once said of him "Michael Harner is a great shaman. He also proves that a person can be both a scientist and shaman."

Harner received his doctorate in anthropology in 1963 from the University of California, Berkeley. He taught there, at Columbia and Yale, and at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, where he chaired the anthropology department. His many honors include the 2009 Pioneers in Integrative Medicine Award from California Pacific Medical Center's Institute for Health & Healing, an honorary doctorate in shamanic studies from the California Institute of Integral Studies, and special academic recognition at the 2009 meeting of the American Anthropological Association, at which he was honored for his role in the exponential growth of the anthropological study of shamanism. His classic book *The Way of the Shaman* has long been considered the premier text on modern shamanism.

1.
Panel of the Horses, Chauvet Cave, France. Aurignacian period, Upper Paleolithic, circa 31,000 years old. (Courtesy of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, Regional Direction for Cultural Affairs, Rhône-Alpes region, Regional Department of Archaeology.)

2.
Altai (Siberia) shaman. (From the collection of the Russian Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg, Russia. Collector M. P. Gryaznov, 1930s.)

3a.
Amazonian Shuar (Jívaro) shaman, Natem Anank Nunink Nunkai, playing musical bow. (Photo by Catherine R. Nunkai, 2007.)

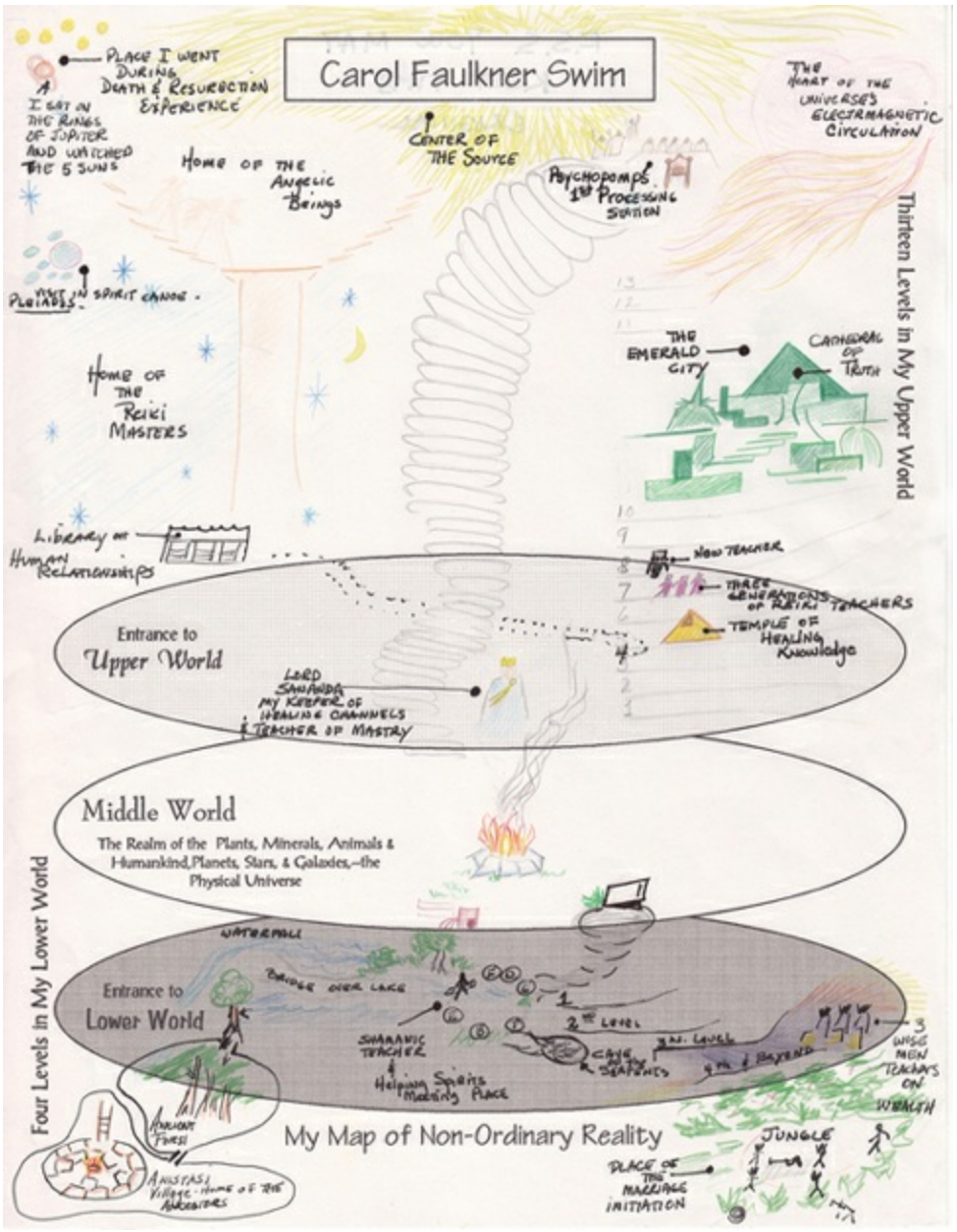
3b.
Drawing of probable shaman, merged with Bison Spirit, playing musical bow. Trois Frères Cave in southwestern France. Upper Paleolithic, circa 15,000 years old. (From Abbé Henri Breuil, *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art* [Montignac, France: Centre d'Etudes et Documentation Prehistoriques, 1952]: 164–69.)

4.
Daur shaman with eye curtain, Inner Mongolia, China. (Photo by Meng Huiying, 2010.)

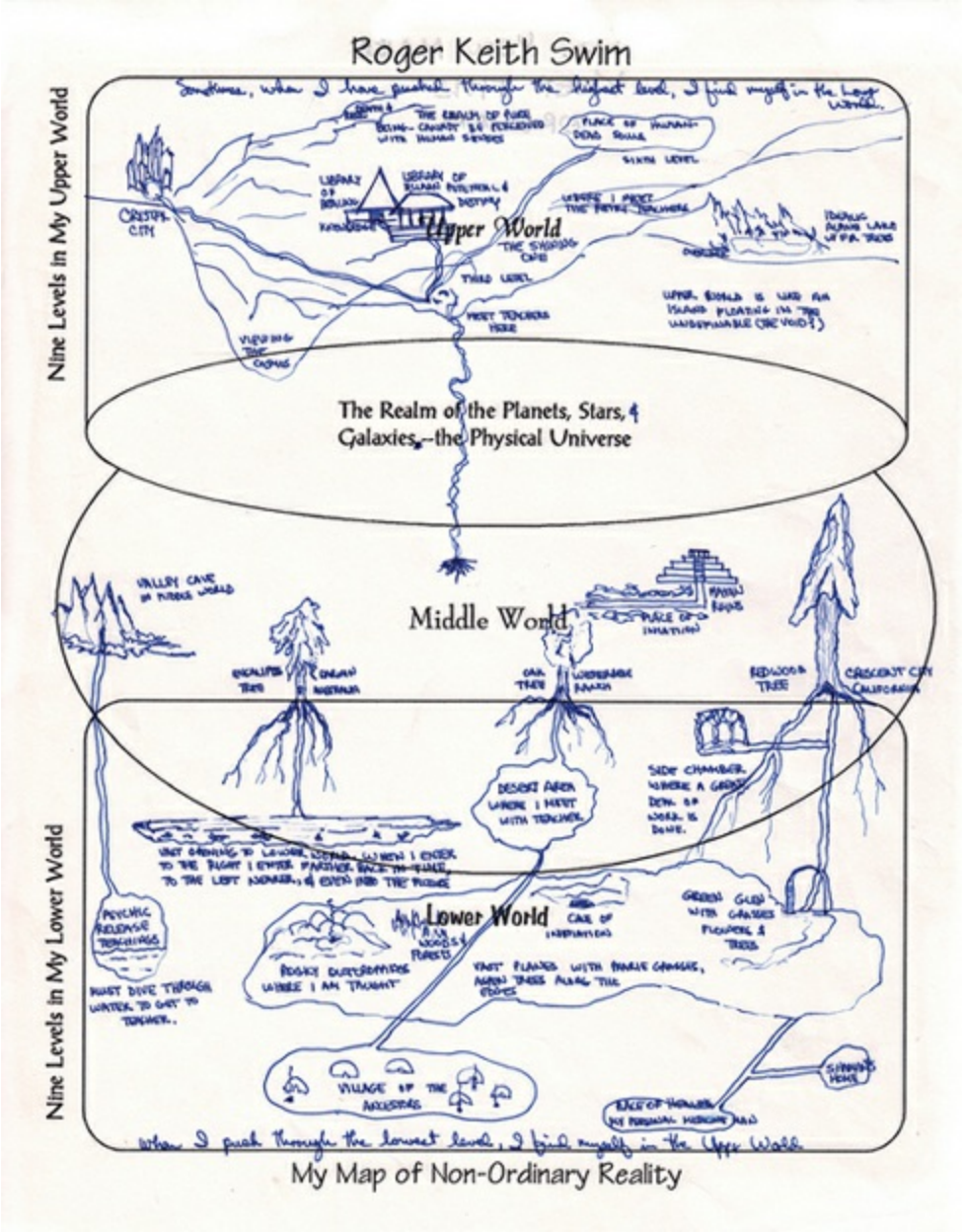
5.
Idol of Nganasan people, Siberia. (© 2004 Foundation for Shamanic Studies.)

6.
Sami shaman’s drum showing the three worlds. Pre-1801, northern Samiland (Torne Lappmark). The black-and-white rendition below the photograph clarifies the images on the drum. The shaman’s map of the nonordinary universe is drawn on the drum face, with horizontal lines dividing the worlds. The reindeer figure at the top right pulls a sled carrying a god or shaman toward the Upper World. The Upper World includes several god–spirit figures in human form. (State Museum of Ethnology, Munich, Germany. Photo by Marietta Weidner.)

7.
Shaman’s drum of the Khakas people (Siberia). The Upper World, separated from the Middle World by a chain of triangles representing mountains, portrays various spirits, the sun, and other heavenly bodies. The spirits and gods of the Lower World are shown at the bottom of the drum. (From the collection of the Russian Museum of Ethnography, St. Petersburg, Russia. Collector A. V. Adrianov, 1909. © B&C Alexander/Arcticphoto.)


Carol Faulkner Swim
Thirteen Levels in My Upper World
Four Levels in My Lower World
Entrance to Upper World
Middle World
The Realm of the Plants, Minerals, Animals & Humankind, Planets, Stars, & Galaxies,–the Physical Universe
Entrance to Lower World
My Map of Non-Ordinary Reality
Center of the Source
Home of the Angelic Beings
Home of the Reiki Masters
Psychopomps 1st Processing Station
The Emerald City
Cathedral of Truth
Temple of Healing Knowledge
Lord Sananda My Keeper of Healing Channels & Teacher of Mastry
Shamanic Teacher & Helping Spirits Meeting Place
Jungle
Place of the Marriage Initiation

8.
Map of the three worlds. Details discovered and recorded by Celestia Study contributor Carol Faulkner Swim. (From the Western collection of the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.)


Roger Keith Swim
Nine Levels in My Upper World
Upper World
The Realm of the Planets, Stars, & Galaxies--the Physical Universe
Middle World
Nine Levels in My Lower World
Lower World
My Map of Non-Ordinary Reality

9.
Map of the three worlds. Details discovered and recorded by Roger Keith Swim, also a Celestia Study contributor. (From the Western collection of the Shamanic Knowledge Conservatory of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.)

10.
Shaman of the Mapuche people (Chile) with drum and ascension ladder. (© Martin Thomas, Aachen, Germany.)